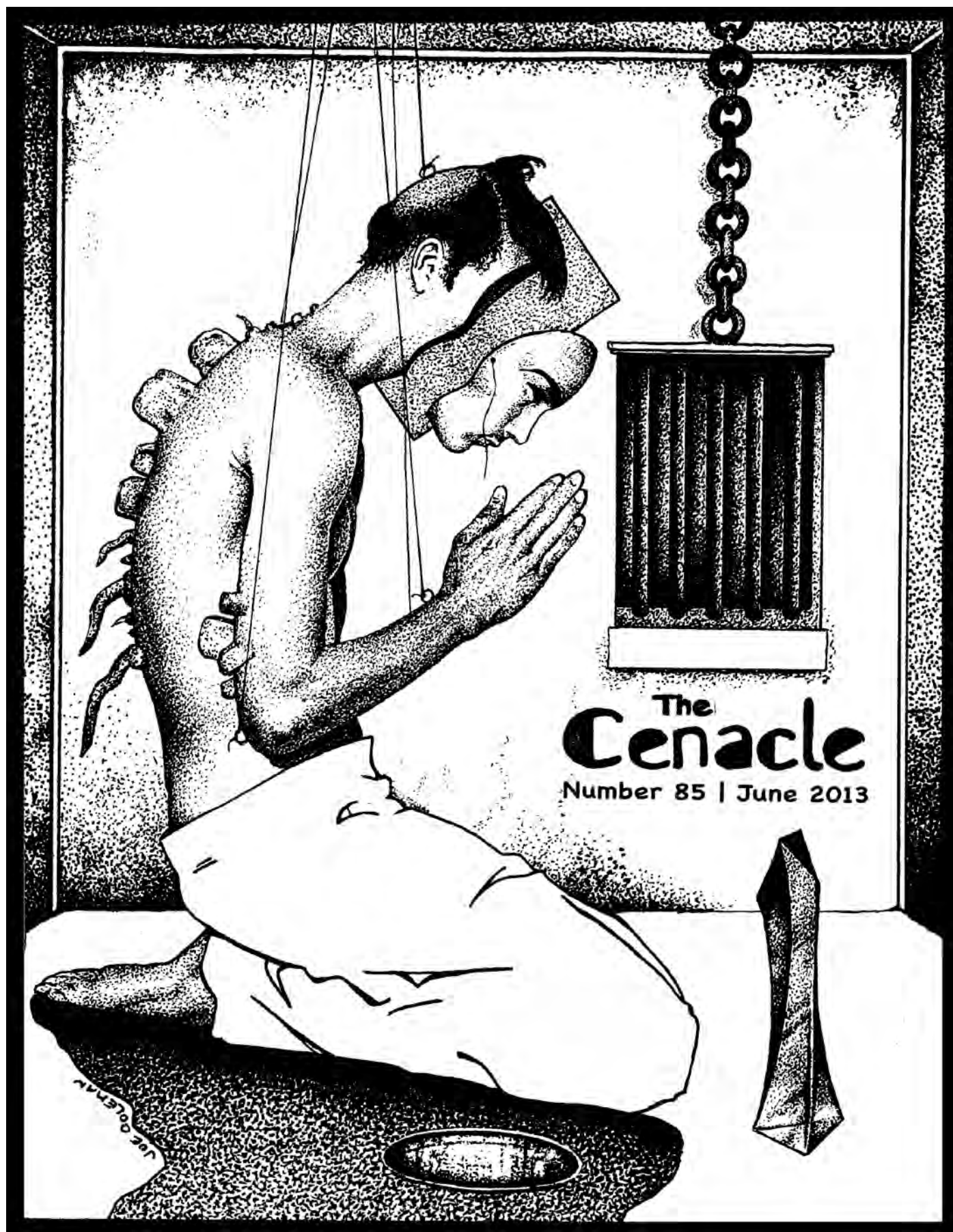






"It's not enough to listen--it's not enough to see--
When the hurricane is coming on, it's not enough to flee . . . "
--Harry Chapin, 1977

June 22, 2013
9:40 p.m.
Christian Science Park-
by reflecting pool
Boston, MA

"No one can advise or help you—no one.
There is only one thing you should do. Go into
yourself. Find out the reason that commands
you to write; see whether it has spread
its roots into the very depths of your heart;
confess to yourself whether you would have to die
if you were forbidden to write. This most of all:
ask yourself in the most silent hour of your night:
must I write? Go into yourself for
a deep answer. And if this answer
rings out in assent, if you meet
this solemn question with a strong, simple:
"I must," then build your life in accordance
with this necessity; your whole life,
even into its humblest and most indifferent
hour, must become a sign and witness
to this impulse.

Rainer Maria Rilke,
Letter to Franz Xaver Kappus,
February 17, 1903

-21-

Those words of Rilke's, from now more than a century ago, have been haunting my own mind since about 1990, 1989, when a girl I loved then introduced me to the wonders of world poetry in translation. For her, it was the Latin American poets & writers. Neruda. Paz. Borges.

Yes, very much them, too. But when I walked into the Hartford Public Library, sanctuary of my grotesque adolescence amidst white '80s suburbia & familial autism & poverty, I was only thinking: "Reading Rilke is going to change my life." Thinking this, having not yet read a word of his. Then I did. So many of them.

Rilke was a great poet, in part because he wrote for the flames that finally devoured him, still young, dead from leukemia, but also in part because he loved those flames, he worshipped their burning. His life does not offer guidance for every except, most specifically, if one chooses to find his art. Thoroughly, exhaustively, & unreasonably. One test. All or nothing.

pass or fail). Rilke allowed for other kinds of lives, well-spent & meaningful. He even seems to advise, against Art, as like the most repentless & thankful of vocations. No god to blame or praise, or crutch near to in reverence, like a preacher might. No crowd to adore for the brutal hours of dull, repetitive practice, like an athlete has.

Art. Choose it & be outcast. Struggle to explain, struggle to make a living, struggle to remember the reasons why. And remember, and again.

Rilke knew all this & that's why he makes it a hard choice. He sets the bar that high because most will not make it.

He saw them then, among his contemporaries. Those who would sing & praise & glory in Art, sing, paint, & then distract. For most, it began with the driving need to earn a dollar, combine with the delightful carnal fantasies of a smiling woman, & conclude with a relieving feeling of being brought into the human fold to rise, to breed,

-23-

to die.

Rilke lived against this, whoring himself, his body's presence, the thrust that had to be prepared to make the poems, to a recurring cast of patrons & patronesses. I can only wonder now, these many years along from that magical library visit, & what it had meant to try & follow his "Go into yourself" dictum, how many rich old bitches & bastards Rilke had to fuck to gain his weeks & months in quiet castle gardens & terraces to write. I hope he enjoyed much of it. I'm certain he willing paid this price.

I worshipped Rilke for many years, printing & hand out countless copies of chapbooks of his poems & letters, spreading his works & name to many people who never would have known either. Buying & gifting published copies of his translated works as gifts. This is Rilke, I'd say. This is me, is what I'd mean. They responded as I had. Believed & loved the man & his words.

June 26, 2013
6:25 p.m.
Harvard Square -
Au Bon Pain Cafe [indoors]
Cambridge, MA.

- It's been some years now, however,
since I've newly recked with his words.
Was his mark on me now still a tender
scar, or become more a tattoo?

So reading his letters to Kappas, for
re-print in this issue of The Cereacle,
new, these years along, my reaction feels
... uncertain. I treasure the words
quoted above, excised from the larger body
of ten letters, because they are... enough.
The rest tries to give meaning, poetical
meaning, to the inexplicable terrors
of human existence (what to do?
who to love? what is desire?
what is Art?). Over & over, he says:
face your fears, know them, embrace
them. Make the worst of them, the
most debilitating, into allies for
your Art.

I find myself dissatisfied. I
consider these letters, & his poetry,

46-

I want him to own & bear the scars
of being alive not within complex
symbolologies or hierarchies of angels,
but as themselves. Animals, trees,
stars not as things to color or
delineate the human drama, but as
the mysteries, to us, of themselves;
our not-knowings of them; our
wonder in all of us existing, different,
identical; other but only to us, not
to themselves. This is not a world of
men & women, but we are men & women
of this world.

Rilke does not convince me
that the natural world exists for
him outside of language & interpre-
tation. In one of his greatest poems,
he must transform the panther's
sufferings into his own to understand,
to empathize.

As for Art, I don't think that
one evaluation of one's impetus to
write, however profound the truths
revealed in the night, is sufficient.
It is easy to yea the Universe under
the moon & stars, but ask those
same questions by commonest light

-47-

of day, in a rush hour crowd of
blank, empty faces; by the grave
of a loved one; into the teeth of a
borrow with no explanation & no
lesson or comfort to induce. Ask
at those times. And again in the
face of failing health, money woes,
worries for an ever-dirtying world.
Ask it to any day's news headlines.

The life of Art must be built
& maintained & evolved every minute
of every day. The ashup is perpetual -
last hour's answer smoke drifted
by, rocks in the water left upstream.
Yet & still, I embrace Rilke as a
brother, for he taught me to make my
path with mine own hands. He taught
me to walk. I walked. Tonight, still,
by the light & musics of a Chinese
I praise & do not understand, I
Thank you, Rilke my brother,
& I walk.

6-26-2013
Cambridge, Mass.



The Cenacle

Number 85 | June 2013

Edited By Raymond Souldard Jr.

Assistant Editor: Kassandra Souldard

TO SEEK A BETTER WORLD [NEW FICTION] by G.C. Dillon	1
POETRY by Joe Coleman	5
NOTES FROM NEW ENGLAND [COMMENTARY] by Raymond Souldard, Jr. [🔒]	10
MANIFEST PROJECT: JUNE 2013	23
POETRY by Nathan D. Horowitz	44
POETRY by Tom Sheehan	49
SIMIAN SONGS [ESSAY] by Charlie Beyer	55
POETRY by Judih Haggai	59
LETTERS TO A YOUNG POET by Rainer Maria Rilke	63
MANY MUSICS [POETRY] by Raymond Souldard, Jr. [🔒]	87
ARTIST GALLERY by Joe Coleman	100
THE STATE OF PSYCHEDELIC RESEARCH: INTERVIEW WITH RICK DOBLIN by Ido Hartogsohn	105
POETRY by Joe Ciccone	115
POETRY by Martina Newberry	116
LABYRINTHINE [A NEW FICTION] by Raymond Souldard, Jr. [🔒]	119
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS	156

SCRIPTOR PRESS



NEW ENGLAND

2013

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MP: JC



To Seek a Better World

[New Fiction]

You may call me Azfar; I am the physician to the Suzerain.

I sat, clumsily, my buttocks feeling the hard and cold marble floor beneath my carpet—a flying carpet. Or one soon to be if I have my conjuring right. And I knew that I did. My blue turban slipped and obscured my vision as I sat down upon my creatively woven rug. Not artistically creative—tho' it may be that too. No! It was simply a creative design to attract the air elementals and to cajole the *Djinn* to provide lift, velocity and a stabilization of tilt and yaw. I have studied more than the scrolls, tablets, and papyri some deem sorcery. The loom and the weaver's skill have been my companions for months. I pushed my head garb higher upon my forehead and adjusted the ruby clasp that secured it—or almost secured. My flying carpet raised a cubit, not nearly enough to soar amongst the *Rocs*.

In my haste, I may have dropped a stitch, or drew a malformed glyph. I must regain my patience for it has been my most sincere virtue these past few fortnights. There is time anon, for it is never too late to trek beyond the sunrise—not even for a scholar as aged as I. A limestone and quartz moon-gazing tower awaits me; there I may live the remainder of my hours in study. My manor-estate allows not this ease; ideals have degenerated to burdens, and eyes that once saw only innocence, now see solely corruption. *I must away!*

My work was interrupted when Janissaries of the Suzerain burst into my sanctum. These were the personal guard of the Imperial Family. Long cavalry sabres and the shorter, sharply curved falchions graced their sides. Conical helmets with a long nose guard and a spike on top adorned their heads. They wore long kilts with interlocking strips of metal shielding. Quivers of arrows rested upon their back along with the small compound bow of the horse-soldier. Their leader was blond like the woolly mammoths they ride on the frozen tundra and even onto the thick glaciers of the far, far Northern Thule.

“The Grand Vizier requires your presence.” It was Vossig, captain of this very special guard, who spoke to me.

I slipped a banned text of the fire daemons beneath the most Holy Book of our Prophet. I thrust a yatagan sword into my burlap belt; only the Suzerain's paladins and soldiers may wear two blades. Was it I who signed that edict so long ago? I have little recollection of such mundane details.

We walked the long boulevard where the Suzerain's war-chariots parade with the plunder and tribute that they have won. I glance at the minarets of my city as we pass. The hanging gardens were terraced upon the hills beyond. But our citizens grow their herbs in the earthen pots at their windowsill: mandrake, rosemary, parsley, and sage. I heard the *vox populi*, the singular murmur of the people, our city's *hoi polloi*. I listened for their generous laughter, their little joys. I serve them as least as much as I serve their titled divinely ordained leaders.

This was an auspicious march through the city for me. Most of my recent sojourns into our municipality have been midnight walks, where my ears could hear only my own steps or the lonely cry of the night watch. The waxing and waning moon has been my sole compatriot and torch bearer, and on stygian nights the stars, like *Surrat al-feras* (Alpheratz), *Ra's al-ghul* (Algol), *Yad al-Jauza* (Betelgeuse), or *Al Najid* (Bellatrix), shone down like the prying eyes of winged *Peris*. I have visited herbalists and apothecaries trading in the rarest spices and medicines carried by far flung caravan dromedaries across the harshest sands.

We came to the palatial compound. The foremost structure was the audience hall of the Suzerain, the *Diwan-I-Aam*. In the past, it was here that the people could come to seek a sympathetic ear for their slights and grievances. Once, I stood as minister at the side of a man of justice, and helped provide relief, succor, and aid. Today, its walls were mute and deaf.

At the far edge of the grand campus, I saw the massive building in which the hostages of subject kings and princes reside; these monarchs send their sons and daughters to be raised by us. Too often these children when grown hate us and rebel. We just had to put down the Impaler's troops, and force him into a western exile amongst his co-religious, though ethically different, allies. He will return, I know, leading vaster forces, and our young Suzerain will ride out on his puissant stallion to meet him. Or so I must conclude.

We passed the House of Wisdom, as we approached the inner palace. I am the curator of this repository of scrolls and records, yet have not set foot within its doors for nearly a decade. A few steps more and we went under the arch to the Suzerain's home and seat of power.

Two large eunuchs blessed with huge, wide, curving scimitars stood before the harem. Their chests were bare and their silk trousers blew as if from a draft, if not a gentle breeze. Only the Suzerain, his queen mother, his wives, seraglio concubines, and children were allowed inside—so I was directed left to other private chambers in the glorious palace, a small chamber. The Suzerain lay upon a desert cot. I smiled. His forefather's resting place was his imperial throne. Today.

The dowager-queen stood beside her son.

"You have served his father."

"I have." Served? Treated! I am a doctor, not a butler, "Your husband was a good man, observant to our gracious Lord, kind to the poor, and judicious to his people." Not a despot to the faithfully righteous.

"You will serve his son as well," the regal queen stated. I bowed as any supplicant would.

When I left this sickroom I met with Grand Vizier Nazeer. He had a swarthier complexion than mine—dusky as I am. He was more heavy-set than I, as well. But his silken clothes marveled the gods of false legend. Only the Suzerain was more richly attired.

"I have prescribed certain herbs and as much venison broth as his body may tolerate," I told the princely official. I fear my eyes told him my own dire diagnosis.

"More than one cause comes to mind. We have magick."

"I had suspected that!" Nazeer spat angrily. "No evidence can be found by my finest operatives." His finest? He has not contacted me before.

"Good witches?" I asked.

"Yes. Magicians, astrologers, and seers. Everyone." Not everyone, I thought, till now. "Nothing the spell-casters can find—no trace, no matter how faint."

"Of course, the natural ravages of disease may be the reason. May our Heavenly Lord

protect him! Or—”

“Was he poisoned?” Nazeer asked sharply.

“I believe he was poisoned!” I looked into his cold eyes.

“Come,” he commanded. I did follow.

The vizier led me to a room where two guards and a twenty-year-old man were. He wore a coarse and burly, brown tunic. Light brown hair, thin and stringy, covered his head. His name was Corrin and I have known him for years. He was the Suzerain’s food taster and not of our true faith.

“This is the slave who is dutied to ensure that our majesty’s meal is safe to eat. He has the ability to suss out the smallest bit of poison. I have seen it myself.”

“You need not hold him in suspicious custody. I believe this foul deed is not of his making. Corrin, give me your cup.” I handed it to the vizier. He placed his nose deep into the ceramic stein, sniffing gently at first, then taking a deep whiff as if smelling fragrant jasmine. But his face did not display sweet-smelling perfume in his nostrils.

“Alcohol! It is forbidden by our Holy Book and professions of our Sacred Prophet.” Nazeer’s voice lowered in reverence: “May Heaven Bless His Name.”

“There is the Law and there is the law enforced,” I replied to the chief judge of the court’s Star Chamber.

“Forbidden to the Faithful, yes,” I continued. “But he is a loyal Infidel. It is fermented bread. For flavor, their brewsters mix in grains of paradise, bitter buds of hops, chamomile, bitter cherries, even coffee.”

“The red kaffir beans such as the Suzerain’s concubines request?” Nazeer asked. Was he considering the cost to the chancery as he queered me?

“The very same! Only roasted and ground,” I informed the exalted advisor.

“Can they not put in poison?” I asked. “My nose detects the bouquet of almonds, just as a vial of arsenic might. I submit that our food taster has been desensitized with the toxin. Our villain utilized his beer ration to accomplish this nefarious act.”

The vizier looked away a moment. “Who would do this?” His voice was fierce as a blustery sirocco.

“I have given you the means. Your harsh interrogators must torture out motives from your usual suspects; however you will get little from good Corrin here.”

“And why do you proclaim that!” Nazeer’s voice filled the room as a haboob storm would.

I placed my hands upon the slave and forced his jaws apart, as a horse trader would do in the bazaar. “He has no tongue!” Only a small red stub moved in his mouth. “It was removed at the command of our Suzerain’s father when Corrin was but a boy. He was cautious about what state intrigues his son’s food taster may overhear.”

Speaking not a word to me, Nazeer turned upon his silked shoes and left the room, signaling for his soldiers to follow.

I was alone with Corrin, as I have been before. I handed him his stein, as I have before. He sipped once again, but no more would I need to doctor the spirit, slowly and patiently adding grain upon grain, scruple upon scruple, dram upon dram. Justice has been done. *Sic Semper Tyrannis*, as our western adversaries speak. Thus always to tyrants. I have done my best to release my people from a cruel overlord. I have rid the world of a mere shadow to a great leader exiled by the usurping machinations of his ungrateful son’s court.

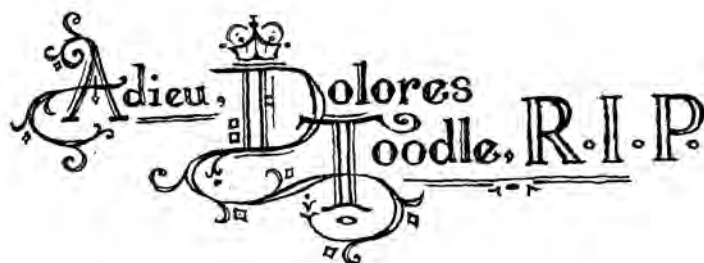
For is it not written:
call no man your master, for you have a heavenly Master;
call no man lord, for you have a heavenly Lord;
call no man father, for you have a heavenly Father.

I left the room for my labors were complete. I need now only conjure my carpet to arise and fly me to a more pleasant place.

Agar Firdaus Bar Rooe Zaminast Haminasto. If there is a heaven on earth, it is here.

* * * * *





'Twas a foggy evening in Coventry.
 'Twas her favorite pub, *The Parson's Key*.
 They remembered Dolores, aged 83,
 and prayed for the miscreant, R.I.P.
 They had lost her. Like the Holy Grail.
 As each one spoke, others drank their ale
 or whiskey, and sadly heard the tales
 of shoplifting, check-kiting, and jumping bail:

"We'd been planning to pull off a jewelry heist . . .
 We'd pawn the rubies. We'd fence the ice . . .
 We'd already cased the place once or twice . . .
 Sweet Jaysus! It would have been nice!
 —but then Dolores began acting odd . . .
 even for such a peculiar broad,"
 said Millie as Bridie agreed with a nod.

"We were closer than peas in a pod.
 For nearly a week she lay in her bed,
 hatpin-pierced icepack upon her head.
 She rose up only to see the cat fed,"
 Mrs. Millicent Martin said,
 "and she herself barely eating a crumb . . .
 I stopped by with scones and offered her some
 of my tea-cakes laced with a splash of rum,
 sayin', 'Take a wee taste, 'ole chum.'



“Yet all she did was stare into space—
 that far away look on that sweet wrinkled face—
 and in those eyes I could find no trace
 of my favorite felon there any place.
 So I told her, ‘Dolores, methinks I’ll move on . . .
 ‘tis gettin’ late. Tomorrow’s dawn
 may bring us a scam or a clever con.’
 I returned the next day. She was gone.”

The village paper included no note of Dolores Toodle
 but mentioned (I quote . . .)

*In a recent number this journal wrote of delinquency, hoping for antidote to petty thefts
 on Cavendish Street. It seems now, their reign of terror complete, these juveniles,
 under increasing heat, have conceded to final defeat. With windows, gardens, walls untouched,
 with tires remaining inflated, with no reported fires of late, and no graves desecrated,
 with McIsaac’s reopened and no hotwired Bentleys and no muggings perpetrated,
 it appears the rule of law and order at last is reinstated.*

“I agreed we’d meet in some singles bar
 then I stood her up,” sobbed Jeremy Carr.
 “She reminded me of my great-grandma.
 Some flirtations go too far,
 but I ought to have dated the dotty old dame . . .
 May or December—it’s all the same—
 and she was quite spry for somebody so lame.
 If her heart was broken, then I’m to blame.”

Given the recent drop in crime,
 even the Constable found some time
 to pop in for his gin-with-a-twist-of-lime.
 He stated, “Tho’ not an acquaintance, still,
 I’m assured she’ll be missed by her neighbors and
 such good friends who loved Miss Toodle so much.
 In the end ‘tis our memories keeps us in touch
 with our dearly departed. We all needs a crutch
 to lean upon as we copes with loss
 or a Simon what helps us carry the cross
 of grief what can weigh like an albatross.
 So we keeps on rollin’ and gathers no moss,”
 smiled the Constable (given to trite cliché).
 He concluded his pieties with, “I’d say
 Miss Toodle is no doubt now making her way
 to a better place and a happier day.”
 (For Constable Bevins was non-too-bright
 . . . in other words, not wrapped that tight.
 He’d been blacklisted from the Isle of Wight
 for some obvious oversight).

Thus they drank reminiscing, 'til half-after ten,
remembering Toodle, remembering when
they had barely avoided a stretch in the pen.
(Constable Bevins was gone by then).

Millicent sighed as she lifted a glass
and toasted their crony, "Those times were a gas!
That brainy bitch had two balls of brass . . .
Here's to Toodle!"
But all things must pass . . .

In the fog-shrouded gloom of that Coventry night
they wetly slipped slowly from each other's sight.
The Parson's Key barkeep turned off the last light.
R.I.P.* "D.T."
Amen.
That's right.

*So wherever you are,
you might raise a toast to whoever it is
you are missing the most.*

* * *

***Residing In Paris!**—and good luck to her,
arsonist, vandal, and pickpocketeer,
Dolores had hoodwinked them all. *Mon Dieu!*
What a pack of patsies they were.

Millicent Martin went back to school. She became a defense attorney.
She found the small steps between grifting and gavel an easy, lucrative journey.
Bridie married her Anglican preacher. She's now Mrs. Reverence Bernie-
Smythe-Wooten-Lancashire Spifford-Dunbarton Fitzhugh-Paddingsworth-MacInerny.

Jeremy, older, wiser, hopeful—sifts ashes of almost-romance.
He goes to his mailbox every day despite the limited chance
of finding a letter or postcard from "D" saying,
"Wish you were here with me in France."
He could have been her right hand man.
He still wears stock-boy pants.

Constable Bevins was forced off the force for being such a joke.
 They replaced him with a Jamaican cop who only drinks rum and Coke.
 (The gang-bangers down on Cavendish Street think he's an okay bloke.
 Whenever they're surfing the Coventry waves, he brings along plenty to smoke.)

And "D" tokes Gauloises on *La Rive Gauche* somewhere.
 She 'scopes out the Louvre with her boyfriend Pierre.
 (They share an abandoned *pied-à-terre* with her tabby alias "Molière.")
 She prowls through museums and galleries there,
 purloining fine art with a sly *savoir-faire*.
 She adores going dining at Maison Robert.

That's it!
C'est fini!
 I DON'T CARE!

* * * * *





Raymond Soulard, Jr.

Notes from New England

[Commentary]

*"Please accept this ragged purse
of high notes."*

The following continues the series originally called Notes from New England, begun in issue 24-25 (Winter 1998), then revived in issue 59 (October 2006) as Notes from the Northwest, & appearing since issue 75 (October 2010) under its original title. It is intended as a gathering-place for observations of various lengths upon the world around me. It will be culled, like much of my writing, from my notebooks, and perhaps these thoughts will be expanded upon sometimes as well.

Dream Raps, Volume Two

The Ships Have Always Been Overhead

The ships have always been overhead. And yet, not *just* overhead. For you see, *we are on those ships*, as we walk around, down here, we are on those ships that are overhead.

And you wonder: *well, what can that mean?* How can you be on a ship overhead, & walking around, down below? And I say to you: *I don't know*. And I say to you: *dreams are real, too*, even though they seem many, disparate, fragmented. *Yes*. Dreams, ships overhead, walking around down below. Now that's a kind of a . . . formula both real & metaphorical, & it's yours to parse out . . . if you care to choose.

Traveling in the Midwest

I find myself traveling, in the Midwest, with several men. Not sure where we're going. We're on a strange bus, at one point, it's like a rolling restaurant, there are tables & waitresses. No one seems to be aware that we are rolling through the land.

I turn, & I know they're gone, those men I was traveling with, & it's probably for the best. In the corner on a small black-&-white TV, that nobody is paying attention to, I see that a movie is on. I learn it's called *RemoteLand*. It's about a woman that's captured & brought to a tiny cell where she powerfully imagines her youth & her playmates. Her playmates seem to be boys from TV shows, rather than real boys that she remembers.

I switch the channel, the movie is too sad, & I see someone who looks like me who is in a

bathroom, pissing in the sink, & people keep coming in, coming & going, as though the bathroom is the necessary path from one needed place to another. And they just keep coming & going, & I just keep pissing & pissing, & this all seems strange, I guess.

It reminds me of this time I went over my teacher's house for class, & we each had to wear a hat & write our initials on them. And I had to write an essay, for the class, on a small scrap of paper.

The teacher's house is big, multiple levels. Somehow I find out that the teacher is dead, & I run into the room where all the students are gathered, & I tell them all. "He's dead!" And nobody knows what to do, so we explore his house that we'd only known one room of, thus far, the place where we held the class. He has a vast library in the basement, on the second floor, the kitchen, there are many books everywhere.

And then someone climbs into a cupboard, & laughs, & the door opens slightly, & many tiny golden bees fly out. They don't seem harmful, & we're sad, because the teacher's dead. We liked him. And . . . we're sad, about the teacher.

Ice Cream Truck

It was like this, it was like this exactly, well, sort of. I was standing at a bus stop with two guys, and an ice cream truck pulls up, and the front of it was filled with branches, couldn't see a driver.

But out back they had ice cream for sale and I pull out money to buy three but mine ends up melted on the ground, still in the container. I try to eat it but bad, and I'm mad since I'd paid for them all. I just walk away because I have a party to go to, ice cream or not. I arrive at the party, with many balloons, and there are many there but I don't know anybody.

And then I see these two girls I knew a long time ago and I hug them but they had to go. And I was alone with the strangers and I thought, *well this day isn't going well*. So I left, kept walking and came to the beach. There were coins on the ground, I noticed. I bent down to look at them closely and each coin had a little I sticker on it, little letter I. Then what I did was I sat with the coins and I watched the ocean. It seemed peaceable finally after all that ruckus.

There's a Valley

So here is how it went: there was a neighborhood, in a valley, and down the road comes these laughing crazy boys. They've got machine guns, they're cutting down everyone in their path. People are firing back, and the crazy boys are getting cut down, until there are only four of them remaining, holding hands, laughing, *crazy! What the hell!* And . . . somewhere . . . there's



a machine gun, and its turret tipped over, still firing. And if you look in that direction, you'll see . . . a cemetery, and the men of the town, or the neighborhood at least, are rushing to set it on fire.

And I'm Ready to Teach a Class

And I'm readying to teach a class, but it seems I'm not prepared. And I wonder who would show up anyway, because it's snowing, and I'm unsure. And the musician is asking me about commandments versus enders. And I explain to him—since no one is showing up to my class—that I have the time—and this seems more important anyway—that the commandments believe there is a set of rules to grant and receive rewards, and the enders believe that it would all be beautiful no matter what. And on the radio, Jimi Hendrix is playing, and I said: “He was a ender.” And this all made sense, and the musician wondered if he'd made it all up, feared he'd made it all up. But I told him he was smart, and I didn't think he had, and these were *psychedelic designations*. And I asked him: “Have you ever read a book interpreting Jimi Hendrix's lyrics?” But I don't think he had, as of yet.

Taken a Bus to a House

I'd taken a bus to a house, and I was with others. But they didn't like me. An old friend of mine was there, and I pushed him to the wall, *hard*, and I begged him to *back me up*. Offer a word on my behalf, defend me to others, but I don't think he could, and I don't think he did. And this was all very disturbing, but I left, my head hung lower.

I lived in an apartment. And there were these guys upstairs, who kept coming through the windows and taking things. And they made it seem as though, well, it was their due, it was what they did. *They'd come in, they'd take things*. And I couldn't keep them out. Eventually, I ended up a floor below, exactly below, my apartment, with some allies. These allies could hear the noise above, and that reassured me. They heard those guys coming in and taking my things, and I found this reassuring, as though *they really did come, they really did take. Someone could verify*. Very strange. Would you need verification? Maybe. I'm not sure.

I fell asleep that night, in my bed, in my apartment, with my diminishing number of things, and I dreamt of a man I used to work for. He was still sad, he was still angry. And his hair, strangely, was like tentacles—they waved wildly around. And he was sad and angry and I couldn't give him any comfort. But I noticed that when he played with his niece, he was happy, and that was good. Because in this world, you've got to find something or someone, that makes you happy. What other choice do you have?

What You Love Will Warp Your Path

I guess you could say that what you love will warp your path, one way and another. So your best angle on the thing is to make sure you love as well as you possibly can, because your path will warp, one way and another. And there's nothing wrong in that. It's a good thing. Some warps in the path can be as beautiful as you can possibly imagine. But remember: it's all warps in the end.

Big Canvas, Empty

It was, um, it was a big canvas, empty, that's what they said, I think. The bit that remains was the universe that split off from an unchosen decision, a splinter, and it only contains that decision when a person is lonely but perhaps there's pity and there's provided a friend, you might say, so anyway—

the other thing was there was this actress and she was having hallucinations and she accompanied me while I was playing miniature golf but you see I wasn't playing it right, because I was taking long shots and there are no miniature golf long shots, there's none in that particular game. And so it went badly. We took our suitcases and we went back to the bus stop at the side of the road. It was one of those long distance bus stops where you just stand there seemingly in the middle of nowhere, except for the miniature golf course, of course, where we got thrown out of. And then we were on the bus for a while and I think that went badly too because then we were on a truck, and that went OK for a while.

The trucker had a strange hat on, it had floppy ears and big eyeballs at the top of it and he didn't look like the kind of fellow wears such things, but there were other odd things about him too. He had lots of photographs of clowns. He told us he visited every circus he could because he had a fascination with clowns. He said there was a clown in his heart, if not two or three—

But then the truck got stolen, or maybe we came out of the diner and it was gone. And so we needed some help finding the truck, if it was possible. We went back to the diner and there were these Jewish guys and these Spanish guys, there was a gang of them, it was a strange mix of guys, and they had guns, we noticed. We were determined to get the truck back, but hopefully no blood would be shed. And they drove us and they had a strange car too and it was an *El!!! Camino*, that's what it was called, an *El!!! Camino* but you see it didn't find the truck. The *El!!! Camino* did not find the truck but we thanked them and we told them for helping us, even though we failed, *you get many karmic points*.

I Am Watching This Story from Another City

I am watching this story from another city. I don't know why I'm in one city watching another,

watching this story unfold. There is a boy and there's a girl and they're in a house with many floors. There's an elevator that runs from one floor to the next. They're trying to get together, to be close, but it's not working. They seem to end up on different floors at different times.

I watch as the days go by, the seasons change, it seems to be an awful long time that passes, and yet they never grow old, and they never leave the house, and at one point they find each other in the elevator, by accident, and for a moment they're close, happy, makes sense, things cohere, and then something, and then something else, and as I watch now they're on different floors again but they remember.

The remembering is what changes things because if they have, they will again, and I watch as they near from one obstacle, and then the next, sometime an interior obstacle, sometimes an exterior one. And then finally, many floors up, there he is, there she is, they're together, it's a sweet story. I watched it all my life, from afar. I'm satisfied. I close the window and I pull the curtain closed.

That Old Bookstore

It went on forever. It seems. It was long, it was longer. There were far deep rooms, full of lit'rature. *Lit'rature*, you might say. Brick walls. I was there, scrounging for a living, *and yet* trying to make a phone call to another employer. Simultaneity, it made no sense, and yet it did. I will tell you: *it did*. And it got busy, as such places do, but I never seemed to be able to figure out when to help, and nobody called me, and it wasn't all very friendly but—it was as though something that no longer exists continued to exist in other strange ways. Went on and on, went on and on.

Well, time passed, as it does, and I have a new job, in a converted factory building, cluttered rooms, and I'm trained at various times by a man and a woman. There are others going for the same job, good pay, an office and a desk. Above us, there's sort of a magazine rack, on a mezzanine. *Run by the Catholics*, someone says.

And the big guy, a recovering Catholic, talks to me about this. We agree: the Golden Rule is the best guide. Between us, we agree to that. And at some point, all of us are called to gather for a man talking. And I keep finding myself standing in people's ways, and they shove.

And later on I'm at a desk, there's some candy, it might be Christmas. And there might be a going away party going on, and I'm tempted by a creamy sweet, but I don't indulge. The woman is training me, but she has to leave, and then she's gone. And I'm thinking: I really like the job I already have, back there, wish it could go on. That's what I think to myself.



The Recklessness of Symbols

Daniel Joseph (spraypaint on cardboard)

On loan from the Oaf Tarback private collection

"To string incongruities and absurdities together in a wandering and sometimes purposeless way, and seem innocently unaware that they are absurdities, is the basis of the American art."

- Mark Twain

"Mighty warriors, hoary sages, impossible heroes."

- Helen Keller

Wild Wild Days

These are wild wild days. *Wild days*. Lawless. Constant attacks, by vicious groups. Society retreats to a bunker, guarded constantly, thick doors, and I'm not allowed in. Punished, for having led them here. The vicious ones. I didn't do it on purpose. But I did do it. The doors will not open for me, so I run. I think there are others running with me, and we're chased, and up ahead, coming at us down the road, many cattle. They block the way. We scramble off the road, up a hill, into tangly brush. Desperate, but not yet caught.

Old Movie on TV

Might have been an old movie on TV. I'm not exactly sure. But there it was, set in space, a group of people come together, seemingly randomly. For a moment, they're set to make war on their slavers. And then they're all captured, except for one, who joined late. He follows their prison ship, as it flies low over the planet. Looks like an airplane. They think they can get control of it. They think they can bid their freedom. They think they're going to attack the complex.

But the whole thing's a fake. Their hope is false. But we do learn, near the end of the movie, *these are the people who sent the Red Bags down. One, none, and many*. And I seem to recall, before I fall asleep, a sort of dream-not-dream. I pass the spook in the hallway of some building. His eyes look red. He looks beat up. He has a copy of *Labyrinthine*, typed, held together on a binder ring. I tell him: *there's more*. Or: *there's a second edition*. Hmmm.

There's An Invasion

There's an invasion. An overwhelming, unbeatable force, that comes. And at one point, I'm far from home, traveling by bus. I lose my book bag. Meet up with several others, and make it to my apartment. And there are squatters there. I throw them out, of course! But they hang around. Seem to feel they have a claim.

Later on, I'm in my ship, a pilot, flying into battle, flying low. Firing at the aliens in their ships. *I feel like I'm accomplishing something*.

Then something else, I guess, and I'm in a warehouse, or something. On steps, running. And the light of day is gone. They control the situation beyond all reason, it's obvious. And I can't understand how they did it. When they came, when they arrived, when they first appeared in the skies, they claimed they'd come from God. They were His missionaries. And they'd come to destroy the foul Earth, and pass judgment on all humans. *People believed it. Heh. Heh. Heh. Believed it by the millions*. And they submitted themselves to be judged, and punished. And I really wonder if that's how it's going to play out.

I Was in a Fake Rock Band

Well, there was that time I was in the fake band. There were nine of us, in that band. And we stood in front of the classroom, and we answered questions, like it was a press conference. And it was funny, even jocular. Until I noticed a sack in my hand. Reached in, and suddenly I'm holding a snake. Holding it at arm's length, to keep it from biting me. *Now how did that happen?* How is it a jocular press conference for a fake rock band turned into a terrifying situation, I wonder?

I returned to the car, looked in the rear view mirror, and saw two things. One: there was someone sleeping in the back. Two: I didn't recognize my face. Hmm. I'm someone else. *Again.* That's a girl in the back. She's in a blanket. I think she's nude.

We drive to an old bookstore. There I see a strange book, on one of the lower shelves. And I wonder at it. *Is it portent, signal, clue, random? Should I buy it? Should I steal it? Would it make a difference in the end?* Maybe. I return to the car, and the back seat is empty, save all the blankets are folded. *Oh*, and there are three guys there, in the car. I notice the blankets first, because I was looking the back seat, but then I noticed the three guys, two in the front seat, one in the back seat, and the blankets. I get in the back seat, next to the blankets. *Well now, where to?* They won't say. We just have to drive, and drive, and drive.

Now as I find my comfort among the blankets, not knowing where we're driving, or what danger I've fallen into, I fall into a dream. In this dream, I'm packed into bed, with eight other people, and yet it doesn't seem strange. And I find that we work well together, even though we're packed well in this bed. There's a cooperating spirit. Why, if we wanted to be, we could be a jocular fake rock band. I would just prefer that this time there not be a sack, with a snake inside.

I'm in My Old City. . . Emandia

I'm in my old city, born there, live there, become at least part of someone, towards someone there. It's before dawn, dark, walking to work, no street lamps, and there are voices everywhere. I'm afraid, but I keep walking. Eventually nearing Bluebird Insurance Company. I find a couch, and a blanket, settle in, begin to doze. Time passes. And then there are some ladies, and a cop. He's pointing his flashlight at me. I explain I'm going to work early, the plumbing is broken at home.

The ladies crowd my couch and I sit up. It's no longer as comfortable as it was. But you know how that happens. Later that day, I find myself in another city. The next city. The other-piece-to-the-picture city. *Another* piece to the picture, anyway. I'm at a street corner, and there's this Spanish tourist, and there's his woman, and they seem lost. And they have a map, and we cross the street, and we sit on a bench, and there's snow and ice, and look at the map. And I point out to them the street they're seeking. And I tell them they will have fun, for sure.

And that night, after such an adventurous day, I dream I am aboard a space shuttle, far in the future, with a crew. Good folks. Not sure where bound. At one point I cry out: "*I hope when they come, it's a bald blue giant, standing, laughing on a planet, like it was a small stone!*" I go into the cockpit to fly for awhile, replace another, he's disappointed, and I hear Marvin Gaye singing, "*Let's get it onnnnn . . .*" And I wonder if he did any other songs. And the dream eventually crackles, perhaps into another, perhaps not, and I wake up thinking of a place, that I do not yet know, but that I may come to know, in one way or another. *Emandia . . .*

After I'd Come to the Vast Camp

Now what was strange, and I'll tell you it was strange, and I'll say, *yes, it was strange*, and I can't think of any other way to put it, is that, after I came to the vast camp, climbing hills and hiking, I didn't like it. And I knew there was some building with some weird treasure, somewhere in there, somewhere in this vast camp of buildings.

But the weirder thing was that I met several people, and they were each wearing a costume that promotes eternal life. It adheres to the body, sucks out toxins, and apparently that makes it so that you live forever. And in the middle of this vast camp, with who knows what going on, some kind of weird treasure in one of the buildings, well, just to hear these people talk, and to hear their hope, *this* is what the answer was. *To wear this costume and live forever*. It seemed like it really didn't sum, coherently.

And so I just kept walking on, sniffing for the treasure, as that was the best way for it to be found.

All White Imp

And it was strange, it was *strange*. It was strange to see that maniacal little imp cackling but all white. Someone had removed her colors. The colors from her garments, the colors from her face, the colors from her limbs. She was all white. But she maintained her cackling airs. *Oh, she maintained them*.

And we got in the special car and we drove, indoors, past restaurants, Chinese and otherwise, through room after room. We came to a room where there were people sleeping in beds. Well, they had to move them because we had to drive on through. *We had to drive on through*. I awoke and that little imp was full-colored again, her smile just as crazy, and she conducted the chorus of birds outside with particular glee that morning.

I Killed Someone

And it was one of those that leaves you shaking and wondering later. I killed someone, I think. I don't who. And I'm fleeing with my notebooks in a black garbage bag in a shopping cart. I end up in the hills. And I'm pursued, and I'm caught, or I give up, and I retreat to a house where nobody cares. All I'm thinking is: *what am I going to do about my notebooks? How am I going to secure them, make sure they're safe?* I don't know.

Eventually I'm in prison and I'm being processed by a woman named Scam. She sprays me thoroughly with disinfectant. And I'm thinking about writing the whole time. And then two small individuals, relatively good friends, come into my mind and I think of them. Each has a blue nose. One is gray and white, one is white and gray. I think of them and I'm comforted in my troubles.

There is a Room

There is a room, and in the room there is a goldfish. I find him or her and place him or her in a cup. At some point, the unruly one floods the place, water coming in from the cellar, and I yell, panic. I use different vessels to hold the goldfish. And then there are two. I thought the other one was dead but I guess not. Good news.

And then they can talk sometimes. Sometimes they're not even in the water. I have a hard time figuring out where to put their vessel so it'll be safe. It keeps crashing to the ground and breaking. They're nice and pleasant, vulnerable, but nice goldfish. At one point I am filling their vessel with water and they are helping me to know if the water is too hot or too cold. We work together. As it should be.

They Hold a World Between Them

They hold a world between them, balanced. His hands above, hers below. They speak rarely. He wonders about her kiss, she wonders about his touch. This is something important they do. Down below, within that world, there is a very small store and it stays in business by selling one very important thing. And the one very important thing connects surely but mysteriously to those together rarely speaking, holding the world in balance.

Along Came the Traveling Troubadour

Along came the Traveling Troubadour, long dead, but loved by many when he appears. And I find myself in his company, happily, as many times before. I marvel at the fact of him being

here, and wonder what is real. *What is real?*

Then I show him my puzzle. You see, I have a blue sheet to write upon but I seem to have trouble writing upon it. I wish to fill it with fragments which, when assembled, form a whole but still fragments. He nods, sees my dilemma. *None, one, and many*, he laughs, almost cackles. Yes, indeed, I say. *None, one, and many*. He lifts his instrument, strikes a perfect note, smiles a happy smile, and is gone until the next time around.

Old Tyme Restaurant

I was with my friend and we were traveling along. We come to one of them restaurants, old tyme restaurants. One where burgers are a nickel and shakes a dime. I don't suppose you find them on the main roads anymore. They're still around, if you look.

And I got out with all my cleaning materials and I began to wash down the windows. My friend stayed in the truck, he was not one for them fancy television devices talking like the future. He said he couldn't make it. He didn't want to blow through all the money.

Well, sometimes in this world, when it doesn't work out one way, you just keep cleaning. You keep dipping your rag into the soapy water and cleaning until every inch is spotless. And then you step back and admire your work. I learned that from an old codger many years ago and, in this moment, I felt it was the best advice in the world.

Small Apartment Owned By a Mean Man

I was living in the small apartment, owned by a mean man, who would just come on in, walk on through the door. And at night sometimes I dreamed of the necklace around my neck. It signified memories of the nicest kind. Other times, other places. Nothing much, nothing unusual, mean man by day, me with my pendant at night. Some nights.

And then one night I forgot to close the shade with a full moon and I'd been to the beach that day and I was burned by the sun and I couldn't sleep and I watched the full moon with my aching skin. And I saw a face in the moon and the face seemed to talk to me alone and it said *click-click! noise-noise! click-click! noise-noise! click-click! noise-noise!* in a tongue I was not familiar with, but it sounded like the most charming g-nattering I've ever heard.

The next night my skin still troubled me and the moon was still full and what could only be described as the tiny imp in the moon returned to distract me from my pain and sleeplessness, uttering the words *click-click! noise-noise! click-click! noise-noise! click-click! noise-noise!*

On the third night, I could not keep awake as my skin no longer ached but I knew even as I

closed the shade that the moon was waning as it does, and the imp in there was not possible to see at this time. But come the next full moon, burnt skin or not, I would be looking for that imp.



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Manifest Project III



Joe Coleman



Joe Coleman



Joe Coleman



Joe Coleman



Joe Coleman



Joe Coleman



Kassi Soulard



Kassi Soulard



Kassi Soulard



Kassi Soulard



Kassi Soulard



Kassi Soulard



Zannemarie Lloyd Taylor



Zannemarie Lloyd Taylor



Zannemarie Lloyd Taylor



Zannemarie Lloyd Taylor



Zannemarie Lloyd Taylor



Zannemarie Lloyd Taylor



Ralph Emerson



Ralph Emerson



Ralph Emerson



Ralph Emerson



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Raymond Soulard, Jr.



Raymond Soulard, Jr.



Raymond Soulard, Jr.



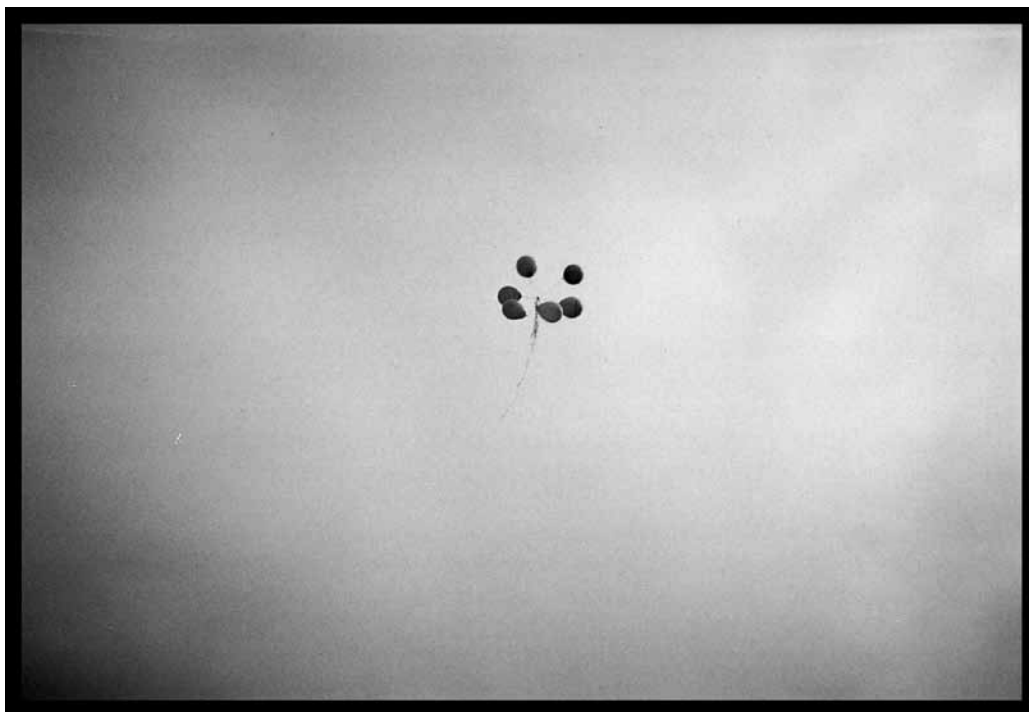
Raymond Soulard, Jr.



Raymond Soulard, Jr.



Raymond Soulard, Jr.



Tom Sheehan



Tom Sheehan



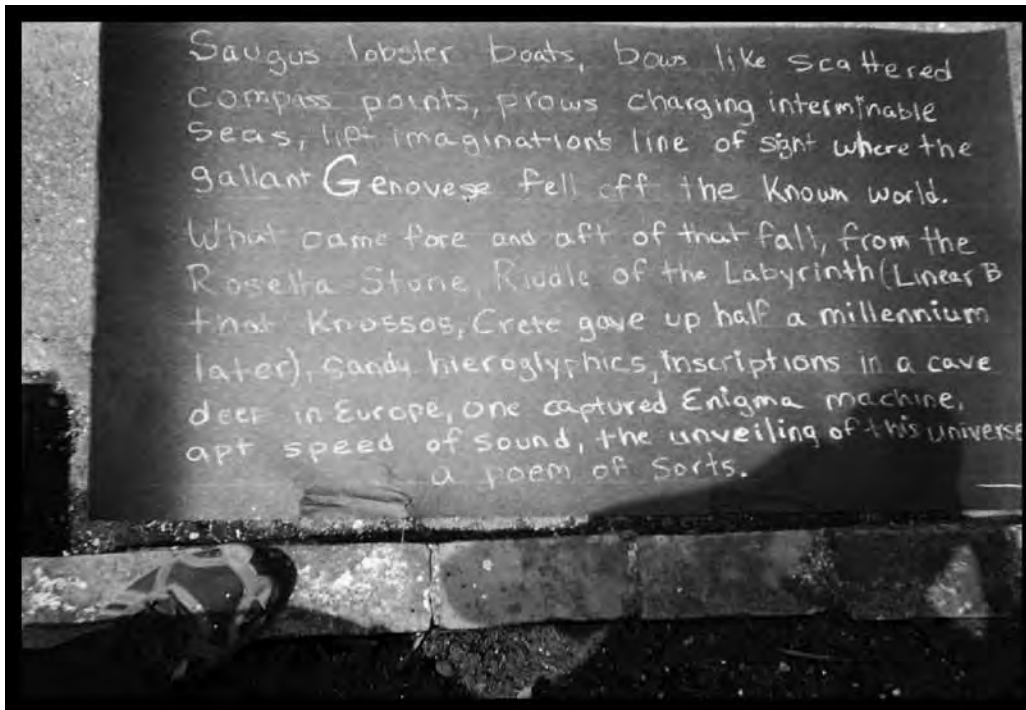
Tom Sheehan



Tom Sheehan



Tom Sheehan



Tom Sheehan



Nathan D. Horowitz

38 1/2 trips around the sun for a total distance of 36,190,000,000 kilometers

I was just thinking about my father's old apartment, with the deep blue wall-to-wall carpet and the big sliding glass doors that led out to the central common area, where the big stones were, and the pine trees, and the swimming pool.

I was just thinking, and my thoughts were both old and colorful, and I still remember the surface of the big granite boulder that I was almost too small to climb up on.

I was just listening to the rain fall in the courtyard in Vienna, as the planet moved around the sun.

I was just feeling the cool air flow in though the window and wash over my back.

I was just thinking that 38 is pretty old, only 12 years to 50, and the 40s will go by in a flash.

Last night I dreamt I traveled to China in a big steel boat that sailed through the air. We landed in a hardware store that had closed for the night. It was full of farming implements, and a Chinese guy I'd been traveling with warned me to take something sharp to protect myself against thieves.

Later I dreamt I worked in a mental institution, and a patient checked in with obsessive fantasies about assassinating the president, and I was thinking about how to treat him using psychodrama.

Last night I was then, I was now, I was ever and ever, over and over again.

There was a roof over my head and a full meal in my belly.

Dirty socks on the floor and a Master's degree on my resume.

Lions in my family tree, shotguns and howler monkeys in my time-lapse photography.

In the midst of the history of the world, I was writing poetry to myself, wondering if anyone would hear me.

And time passed, fluttering its many wings,

And I looked up and there you were.

I was just whipping some cream,

Hoping you would come.

I was just sharpening some stones,

Hoping you would come.

I was just assembling some miscellaneous items from our collective experience,

Hoping you would come.

You'll be happy to know that I flushed the priests and kings down the toilet with these torn hands.

Freed the minds of millions with these torn hands.

Broke the chains that bound us with these torn hands.

And whatever it is that we've all been looking for, I feel like I could just about find it, right now.

It must be around here SOMEWHERE.

It **MUST** be around here somewhere.

I was just looking around confidently, convinced that it was around here somewhere.

It might be somewhere in the history of Europe.

Might be somewhere in the blistering sunlight or the pounding rain, falling on fields, falling on troops.

I was just thinking it might be hidden in my beard, with the guns.

I was just thinking it might be on the tip of my tongue.

I talked my way in and out of trouble with this torn tongue.

Mixed lies and truth like paints on a palate, on this torn tongue.

Walked through dozens of towns in this torn body.

I taught hundreds of classes in this torn language.

Flirted with hundreds of girls with this torn smile.

Spoke hundreds of dirty words through these torn lips.

Walked across the graves of hundreds of people with these torn feet.

I walked slowly under clouds filled with millions of spirits with this torn body.

I was just talking with someone else about this.

She saw everything a little bit differently from the way I saw it.

Where I saw anacondas, she saw elephants.

Where I saw elephants, she saw meteorites.

Where I saw meteorites, she saw herself, and this took me absolutely by surprise.

So I put down the radio and the gun and climbed a tree to try to feed the birds that were swelling up inside my chest.

And whatever it was that we had all been looking for, I realized I might have found it and then left it somewhere by mistake.

Maybe on the sofa during the party, or maybe five hundred meters behind the sofa, hanging over the valley in the darkness.

I must have put it somewhere while I was thinking.

In fact, I might have forgotten where I put it because I've been talking so much.

So I'd better not talk anymore.

At least not for 38 more years.

At least not for a moment.

I saw hundreds of obsidian jaguars with this torn mind.

Heard thousands of songs with these eager ears.

I burned thousands of cobwebs with these words of fire.

Last night it was late and I was tired of looking for it, so I went to sleep. Sleep welcomed me. He threw me a party. He said, "Nathan, welcome, come in, we're all here. All of us."

Later came the dream where I was flying to China in a big steel boat that rocked as it floated on the night wind. And later there was the other dream about the mental patient who fantasized

about assassinating the president.

I'll tell you a secret. Sometimes I feel like I can't wait to be dead. All this wondering and agonizing will be over.

It's not that I want to hasten the process, though. I find living incredibly interesting, even here, even now.

I've stared into thousands of shop windows with these searching eyes.

Read thousands of horrific news headlines with these sad eyes.

Made thousands of scientific discoveries of my own with these bright and hopeful eyes.

Once flew in the nighttime through lightning storms all the way down Central America to Costa Rica with these excited eyes.

I've seen plants in the jungle wet with rain with these calm eyes.

And almost despite myself, I've given voice to language.

Language is mirrors that reflect experience in ever-evolving arrangements.

And experience is moving through waves of pain and pleasure—though that doesn't even begin to describe it.

And every word means something. And every finger points to something. And every foot is traveling somewhere.

And one can ask oneself, *Where is this body going? Where is this blood going? Where is this planet going?*

Maybe I didn't want to write this poem.

Maybe I wanted to write a different one.

But I've made a million sounds in this torn language. Moved a million ways in this torn wilderness. Waved a million wavy flags in this wavy universe.

And I'm only 38.

Who knows what I'll do in the next 38 years.

Who knows what I'll remember when I'm 76, if I live that long.

I was just thinking about my father's old apartment, with the deep blue wall-to-wall carpet and the big sliding glass doors that led out to the central common area, where the big stones were, and the pine trees, and the swimming pool.

I was just listening to the sound of the rain, as the planet moved around the sun.

I was just thinking.

I was just listening to the sound of the rain.

* * * * *



Tom Sheehan

Hawk Performance

In apt darkness chasing him, in mountains where great gorge, lake,
and river give up daylight with deep regret, his shadow hangs itself
forever, the evening hawk gliding mute as a mountain climber at grade,
leaving in our path the next hiker's awed-quick silence, stunned breath,
second look upward on frozen eyes and drifting wings caught forever.
From Yesterday he comes, from Far Mountains only Time lets go of, under
wings steady as scissors where thermals gather, not sure the joy is his, or ours.

So much light falls down from him, from wing capture, from his endless
fleeing of the globe's universal gravitation, and our genuflection, we feel
prostrate. World-viewed incandescence, sun under his wings with quick volley,
slipping through a hole in the sky, tilting the soon-gray aura without sound,
the evening hawk performs above us. To look in his eye would bring back volcano,
fire in the sky, a view of the Earth Earth has not seen yet, Krakatoa lit a second time,
or one wayward comet turning inward on a dime just for performance sake.

* * *

Rubble, Barn Style

Dust from last century
settles deeper, rattles
tales when jammed open
by a heavy broom, a toe

dragged through lifelines,
the demise of contours.
Barns this size, kneed
in the groin by January

storms, wet coughs of April,
August retreats from fire
when gummed capillaries
draw back to old dowsing

grounds, always show age,
the way blue ribbons are worn.
Sun, even a dish-bright moon,
occasionally a star if you're

still in your tracks, breathless,
hoist themselves where nails
also fell to mines of earth.
But it is here that iron

and wood trade final secrets.
Under rust's thickest scab
the metal keeps its black shine;
abrade it with rock and stone

and the line of light leaps out,
like the flesh of wood flashes
its white mysteries orbiting
marks of lunar growth.

A mole tortures underground,
a host of bats above like gloves
hang to dry in the dim light,
and in twisted byroads

and blossoming paths the termites,
carpenter ants, and dust beetles
chew the cud of oak sills, risers
an ash released to two-hand saw,

and green pine checked, stippled,
full of eyes where knots let go.
Square nails, blunt as cigars,
suddenly toothless, a century

of shivering taking its toll,
shake free as slow as worms.
For all the standing still
there's action, warming, aging,

the bowing of an old barn,
ultimate genuflection.

* * *

A Private Ceremony

It was underfoot all the time,
 under the sprawling pines, clutch
 of alders in their secret weeping,
 under bank and half scrutinies,
 under an oft-remembered scum
 of yellow residuals and blatant ash,
 under booming barrage of business
 and turmoil gone amuck inland,
 this river coming back from the dead.

One strike of trout, silver in slashing,
 its quick upstream knifing as if bowed
 outward from a grand archer, a slight
 speckling of oddly hurried hues
 gathered loosely on bright scaling,
 announced the comeback ceremony.

Twelve years since the other trout,
 thick in the middle, hungry, hurried,
 slammed into my hook in river's gut;
 twelve years' surface garbage, underwater
 death in the quick and quiet reign,
 the dread reach for root and soft gill
 too tender and slow to be refused;
 twelve years of idle Saturdays,
 dawns spent over lusterless bait
 and the image of a river buried
 in another time. By the golf course,
 where the banks curved under grass
 overhangs lush as ever, on April
 Nineteenth for thirteen years,
 I caught my limit less and hour of sun.

The drought came, the dozen years
 between the two trout, the gangrenous
 river sore all the way to its falls,
 winter-tied flies bouncing hitless
 and superficially off crested surface,
 targetless, taking the low fly-by
 for nothing, soft whiplash of flight
 whirring into fast silence of dawn.
 A river's dying aches into Earth's heart,
 begins upstream, inland, begins with us

who envy its freedom, its plunge to seas,
 its long passage feeding the mother of all,
 we, upright and erect, we inheritors
 of all we deposit on Earth, at sea.

And so this rite began, underfoot,
 below my waders' light green refraction
 in the clearer waters, began the notion
 of the comeback, the ritual dues paid
 out over the lost years, the way clear
 upstream for one lone trout at history,
 the spawning germ buried behind his eyes,
 a drum beating upon the silver scales,
 the whole vast Atlantic pushing him home,
 the clockwise spin of Earth driving inland
 this new adventurer, this white water
 daredevil banging at my boot, moving on.

I celebrated, hurling back into the dream
 the capture of my hook, silver champion
 of the return, ghost of the missing years
 rushing under the soldered and pewtered
 wrestling of waters becoming Atlantican,
 this voyager on the prow, this river mouth,
 this wide-angled thrasher at work,
 this ceremonial fact of coming clean
 upriver, a new glistening gone at large
 where my boots stumbled where they trod.

I vow now to free all my taking, to loose
 any celebrator on this bright passage,
 and if I should halt the harbinger
 with the crook of my hook, its corruptible
 barb buried in his mouth as deeply
 as memory allows the undertaking,
 I will loose my hand on the hallowed rod,
 I will feed the river with itself.

* * * * *





Simian Songs

[Essay]

In the crystalline quiet of the black, a voice of questioning, melancholy, power and size. “Aahhhh oooooOO, hoo, Ooh, Hoo” It is a long sound, lasting fifty seconds or more, ending in a deep note which no forest animal can have. The sound is pure, in perfect pitch, like the sound of an alien horn, cutting through the night like a knife. The dog erupts out of the tent like a shot, at first running to the camp’s edge, the black wall at the limit of light, then back between my legs. I feel the call is a question, as in, “Who are you?” But also a veiled threat, “This is my place. You are the intruder.”

And yet, in the song of sound . . . is sadness. It is the knowledge that we are somehow the same animal, separated by the grief of genetics, without which we could be brothers. The obvious human qualities to the voice have every hair on my body sticking straight out. I am deeply frightened. *Will this hairy arthropod charge in here and demand something? The dog? Sex? My life?* Visions of yellow fangs and beady eyes course my brain, with continuing thoughts of this giant sub-human tearing my limbs off. A reverse-Grendel story.

But I trust the Indian tales that this is a peaceful creature. “The Man of the Woods” they called him. Nevertheless, I don’t trust the Indian tales *that* much. I get out the SKS, the Chinese assault rifle that will discharge 12 rounds in 30 seconds. This I lay across my lap, the dog cowered beneath. Should I fire off a shot in its direction? A warning scare shot? It seems so crass. It’s everything I hate about white men. Instead, I choose to answer. A single loud “YO” I bellow into the blackness. The silence closes over my sound like a heavy quilt on a baby. The anthropoid’s song seems to linger in the valley, a sound persisting like the ringing in the ears, this call, communing with the Neolithic noises of a hundred thousand years past.

For over an hour I sit at the fire, built up now, beside the hissing gas lamp, clutching the rifle. I am expecting a pair of red eyes to glow back at me from the dark . . . but nothing stirs. Not a breath of wind, a creaking branch, a squirrel settling in, the chirp of a bird. Nothing. It is the unnerving void of space. Here, I with my dwindling fire and gaslamp, am the space ship. Tiny. Insignificant. Vulnerable. Eventually my pounding heart slows enough to where sleep might be possible. As if the goddamned night wasn’t ridiculously long already. Would that this cursed phenomena of night be abolished. I’d rather go nuts from lack of sleep than suffer this inky horror. Now in the bed, tent zipped, dog piled on top, reading the boring engineering book. Eventual sleep. Weird dreams.

Torn instantly from a dream, I snap to sitting in raw fright. The whole valley is filled with screaming and hooting. The dog is leaping around the tent like he’s on fire. *Oh God, we are surrounded by a hoard of monsters!* Two, three, four, or more voices are going at once. There seems to be competition for who is the most vocal. It is more varied also, starting soft, going to a high note, and drifting out to a deep resonate “ooOOO” of bass. Terror is all over me like a cold-water bath. But what can I do? I’m out here near the divide in the remotest place in

America.

The songs and howling continues on and on. It is now 11. The moon has just come up over the ridge. As soon as one song ends, frequently with hoots and oots, another begins. At times, when three or more are going at once, one will set up a *Ki-Yi-Yi*, similar to North African women wailing their group cause of grief. I am trapped in this Saran Wrap bag called a tent with five to fifty monsters out there.

The main ruckus sounds about a half-mile down the valley, whereas the first fella was a quarter-mile upstream where I had been digging. Apparently he hooked up with the gang and ratted me out. If this Neanderthal meeting is a prelude to shredding the invading white man, I am toast. All that's missing are the drums. I may get a clumsy shot off or two, but they are fast and quiet and insanely strong. I'm the pit-bull's rag doll toy. My limbs will be strewn about the valley as if I exploded.

But wait . . . what exactly do I need to fear? These peaceful people of the woods are gathering for what to them is a family barbeque. Who am I to be concerned with their society? Pass the mustard please. To be molested to death, by their mighty prehensile paws, is surely a more romantic way to go than being in a three-car rollover on the freeway. Here I am, pursuing my dream in the wilderness—as are they—*what could be a more natural way to go?*

“YaaahaaaAhhhhooooOOOO, Who, Who”—on and on they persist. Must be fifteen minutes now. My mind, unable to come to terms with a furry simian sing-a-long in the midnight woods, conceives a new idea. These are not Abominable Snowmen—these are wolves! Yes, that's it. Moon up over the ridge and all. The eco-assholes relocation/reintroduction plan for all the extinct creatures. That's who they are. Dogs. Probably woolly mammoths out here too. If the wolves come around here to tear me apart like in the movie *Grey*, I'll empty the assault rifle into the buggers with more alacrity than the first showing of *Dark Night*. I can settle the issue. I'll record the songs on the camera with movie mode. Then some expert from a prestigious university can tell me if it's wolves or Sasquatches.

Now, where's the camera? In the pack. Where's the pack? Outside under the tree. *Outside where the yellow toothed shredders are!* OK, OK, I have the LED light. I make a dash for it. Outside into the howling horror. I always wonder why in the movies they go into the place where the monster is. Yet, here I am. There is no pack under the tree. Scan the whole camp. No pack. Where the hell is it? Flash the light around in the tent. No pack. Scan around the tree and camp again. Gone.

The Sasquatch have taken my pack. They are known for such thieving behaviors. They must be from Central America. The son-of-a-bitch snuck in here . . . right in front of us, and snatched it. My wallet's in that pack. What's the Sasquatch gonna do with a debit card and no PIN number? Every dime I own in the world is in that wallet. I can't just go eating squirrels or roots or campers as they would do. I need cash.

I'm panicking. The singing continues, the voices calmer now with more time between songs. Fuck it! They stole my wallet, I'll blast em! I barge irrationally into the tent for the war weapon. Grab it up. It's been laying on the pack. The pack with the wallet. Hmmm . . . disconnect. Maybe they're not such bad chums after all. Well, at least I can take the safety off the trigger. Ok, here's the camera. The screen is a mass of pixels since I dropped the rock on it, so I can't read the menu and change to movie mode. Mash some buttons. Think this is it. I snap some pictures of the tent ceiling. Nope. Not it. In the ethereal distance, only one animal sings a mournful howl. No hooting after shots. Obviously wolves. Wolves with uncommonly sounding

human voices. Wolves with a trachea the diameter of a bean can. A trachea that can reverberate 30 Hz at 80 dB for 70 seconds. Wolves with 20-liter lungs. 8- to 10-foot-high wolves. Yes. Now. Finally got the camera ready. I'm not going outside for purity of sound, fuck that. The experts will just have to unscramble it like a bad UFO photo. Always the techno problem with this sort of thing. I raise the tiny gizmo to the top of the tent as the last melancholy song fades softly into the night. I wait for the next one. It's been fairly continuous for twenty minutes now. Maybe it's ten minutes? Maybe two hours? Seems I've been doing this all night. Silence. Not a sound. The battery icon is empty—red—blinking its desperate warning. After flashing the roof three times, there's not enough juice to record anything anyway. In a few minutes, the camera shuts itself off. So it is with these things. Might as well go back to sleep. Another eight hours of black and monsters before the dawn. Only one way to get there. Unconscious.

* * * * *





Judih Haggai

wake-up call
penetrates dream
cruel daybreak

* * *

incessant bird beat
five am five am five
until i'm up

* * *

what? a new day?
one more chance
to be me

* * *

eyes close
life events
outstay their welcome

* * *

day preparation
read all the rules
then be simple

* * *

consciousness
wanders back to body
exhausted from dreams

* * *

from house to house
coffee rituals
with bird serenades

* * *

wild party
sun shows up
bird song frenzy

* * *

bird soars
a welcome expansion
mind release

* * * * *





Letters to a Young Poet

Letters to a Young Poet (*original title, in German: Briefe an einen jungen Dichter*) is a collection of ten letters written by Bohemian-Austrian master poet Rainer Maria Rilke (1875–1926) to Franz Xaver Kappus (1883–1966), a 19-year old officer cadet at the Theresian Military Academy in Wiener Neustadt. Rilke, the son of an Austrian army officer, had studied at the academy's lower school at Sankt Pölten in the 1890s. Kappus corresponded with Rilke from 1902 to 1908, seeking his advice as to the quality of his poetry, and in deciding between a literary career or a career as an officer in the Austro-Hungarian Army. Kappus compiled and published the letters in 1929—three years after Rilke's death from leukemia. (Courtesy: Wikipedia.org)

February 17, 1903

Dear Sir,

Your letter arrived just a few days ago. I want to thank you for the great confidence you have placed in me. That is all I can do. I cannot discuss your verses; for any attempt at criticism would be foreign to me. Nothing touches a work of art so little as words of criticism: they always result in more or less fortunate misunderstandings. Things aren't all so tangible and sayable as people would usually have us believe; most experiences are unsayable, they happen in a space that no word has ever entered, and more unsayable than all other things are works of art, those mysterious existences, whose life endures beside our own small, transitory life.

With this note as a preface, may I just tell you that your verses have no style of their own, although they do have silent and hidden beginnings of something personal. I feel this most clearly in the last poem, "My Soul." There, something of your own is trying to become word and melody. And in the lovely poem "To Leopardi" a kind of kinship with that great, solitary figure does perhaps appear. Nevertheless, the poems are not yet anything in themselves, not yet anything independent, even the last one and the one to Leopardi. Your kind letter, which accompanied them, managed to make clear to me various faults that I felt in reading your verses, though I am not able to name them specifically.

You ask whether your verses are any good. You ask me. You have asked others before this. You send them to magazines. You compare them with other poems, and you are upset when certain editors reject your work. Now (since you have said you want my advice) I beg you to stop doing that sort of thing. You are looking outside, and that is what you should most avoid right now. No one can advise or help you—no one. There is only one thing you should do. Go into yourself. Find out the reason that commands you to write; see whether it has spread its roots into the very depths of your heart; confess to yourself whether you would have to die if you were forbidden to write. This most of all: ask yourself in the most silent hour of your night: must I write? Dig into yourself for a deep answer. And if this answer rings out in assent, if you meet this solemn question with a strong, simple "I must,"

then build your life in accordance with this necessity; your whole life, even into its humblest and most indifferent hour, must become a sign and witness to this impulse. Then come close to Nature. Then, as if no one had ever tried before, try to say what you see and feel and love and lose. Don't write love poems; avoid those forms that are too facile and ordinary: they are the hardest to work with, and it takes great, fully ripened power to create something individual where good, even glorious, traditions exist in abundance. So rescue yourself from these general themes and write about what your everyday life offers you; describe your sorrows and desires, the thoughts that pass through your mind and your belief in some kind of beauty—describe all these with heartfelt, silent, humble sincerity and, when you express yourself, use the Things around you, the images from your dreams, and the objects that you remember. If your everyday life seems poor, don't blame it; blame yourself; admit to yourself that you are not enough of a poet to call forth its riches; because for the creator there is not poverty and no poor, indifferent place. And even if you found yourself in some prison, whose walls let in none of the world's sounds—wouldn't you still have your childhood, that jewel beyond all price, that treasure house of memories? Turn your attentions to it. Try to raise up the sunken feelings of this enormous past; your personality will grow stronger, your solitude will expand and become a place where you can live in the twilight, where the noise of other people passes by, far in the distance.—And if out of this turning-within, out of this immersion in your own world, poems come, then you will not think of asking anyone whether they are good or not. Nor will you try to interest magazines in these works: for you will see them as your dear natural possession, a piece of your life, a voice from it. A work of art is good if it has arisen out of necessity. That is the only way one can judge it. So, dear Sir, I can't give you any advice but this: to go into yourself and see how deep the place is from which your life flows; at its source you will find the answer to the question whether you must create. Accept that answer, just as it is given to you, without trying to interpret it. Perhaps you will discover that you are called to be an artist. Then take the destiny upon yourself, and bear it, its burden and its greatness, without ever asking what reward might come from outside. For the creator must be a world for himself and must find everything in himself and in Nature, to whom his whole life is devoted.

But after this descent into yourself and into your solitude, perhaps you will have to renounce becoming a poet (if, as I have said, one feels one could live without writing, then one shouldn't write at all). Nevertheless, even then, this self-searching of yours will not have been for nothing. Your life will still find its own paths from there, and that they may be good, rich, and wide is what I wish for you, more than I can say.

What else can I tell you? It seems to me that everything has its proper emphasis; and finally I want to add just one more bit of advice: to keep growing, silently and earnestly, through your whole development; you couldn't disturb it any more violently than by looking outside and waiting for outside answers to question that only your innermost feeling, in your quietest hour, can perhaps answer.

It was a pleasure for me to find in your letter the name of Professor Horacek; I have great reverence for that kind, learned man, and a gratitude that has lasted through the years. Will you please tell him how I feel; it is very good of him to still think of me, and I appreciate it.

The poems that you entrusted me with I am sending back to you. And I thank you once more for your questions and sincere trust, of which, by answering as honestly as I can,

I have tried to make myself a little worthier than I, as a stranger, really am.

Yours very truly,
Rainer Maria Rilke



Viareggio, near Pisa (Italy)
April 5, 1903

You must pardon me, dear Sir, for waiting until today to gratefully remember your letter of February 24: I have been unwell all this time, not really sick, but oppressed by an influenza-like debility, which has made me incapable of doing anything. And finally, since it just didn't want to improve, I came to this southern sea, whose beneficence helped me once before. But I am still not well, writing is difficult, and so you must accept these few lines instead of your letter I would have liked to send.

Of course, you must know that every letter of yours will always give me pleasure, and you must be indulgent with the answer, which will perhaps often leave you empty-handed; for ultimately, and precisely in the deepest and most important matters, we are unspeakably alone; and many things must happen, many things must go right, a whole constellation of events must be fulfilled, for one human being to successfully advise or help another.

Today I would like to tell you just two more things: Irony: Don't let yourself be controlled by it, especially during uncreative moments. When you are fully creative, try to use it, as one more way to take hold of life. Used purely, it too is pure, and one needn't be ashamed of it; but if you feel yourself becoming too familiar with it, if you are afraid of this growing familiarity, then turn to great and serious objects, in front of which it becomes small and helpless. Search into the depths of Things: there, irony never descends—and when you arrive at the edge of greatness, find out whether this way of perceiving the world arises from a necessity of your being. For under the influence of serious Things it will either fall away from you (if it is something accidental), or else (if it is really innate and belongs to you) it will grow strong, and become a serious tool and take its place among the instruments which you can form your art with.

And the second thing I want to tell you today is this: Of all my books, I find only a few indispensable, and two of them are always with me, wherever I am. They are here, by my side: the Bible, and the books of the great Danish poet Jens Peter Jacobsen. Do you know his works? It is easy to find them, since some have been published in Reclam's Universal Library, in a very good translation. Get the little volume of *Six Stories* by J. P. Jacobsen and his novel *Niels Lyhne*, and begin with the first story in the former, which is called "Mogens." A whole world will envelop you, the happiness, the abundance, the inconceivable vastness of a world. Live for a while in these books, learn from them what you feel is worth learning, but most of all love them. This love will be returned to you thousands upon thousands of times, whatever your life may become—it will, I am sure go through the whole fabric of your becoming, as one of the most important threads among all the threads of your experiences, disappointments, and joys.

If I were to say who has given me the greatest experience of the essence of creativity,



its depths and eternity, there are just two names I would mention: Jacobsen, that great, great poet, and Auguste Rodin, the sculptor, who is without peer among all artists who are alive today.—

And all success upon your path!

Yours,
Rainer Marie Rilke



Viareggio, near Pisa (Italy)
April 23, 1903

You gave me much pleasure, dear Sir, with your Easter letter; for it brought much good news of you, and the way you spoke about Jacobsen's great and beloved art showed me that I was not wrong to guide your life and its many question to this abundance.

Now *Niels Lyhne* will open to you, a book of splendors and depths; the more often one reads it, the more everything seems to be contained within it, from life's most imperceptible fragrances to the full, enormous taste of its heaviest fruits. In it there is nothing that does not seem to have been understood, held lived, and known in memory's wavering echo; no experience has been too unimportant, and the smallest event unfolds like a fate, and fate itself is like a wonderful, wide fabric in which every thread is guided by an infinitely tender hand and laid alongside another thread and is held and supported by a hundred others. You will experience the great happiness of reading this book for the first time, and will move through its numberless surprises as if you were in a new dream. But I can tell you that even later on one moves through these books, again and again, with the same astonishment and that they lose none of their wonderful power and relinquish none of the overwhelming enchantment that they had the first time one read them.

One just comes to enjoy them more and more, becomes more and more grateful, and somehow better and simpler in one's vision, deeper in one's faith in life, happier and greater in the way one lives.—

And later on, you will have to read the wonderful book of the fate and yearning of Marie Grubbe, and Jacobsen's letters and journals and fragments, and finally his verses which (even if they are just moderately well translated) live in infinite sound. (For this reason I would advise you to buy, when you can, the lovely *Complete Edition* of Jacobsen's works, which contains all of these. It is in three volumes, well translated, published by Eugen Diederichs in Leipzig, and costs, I think, only five or six marks per volume.)

In your opinion of "Roses should have been here . . ." (that work of such incomparable delicacy and form) you are of course quite, quite incontestably right, as against the man who wrote the introduction. But let me make this request right away: Read as little as possible of literary criticism—such things are either partisan opinions, which have become petrified and meaningless, hardened and empty of life, or else they are just clever word-games, in which one view wins today, and tomorrow the opposite view. Works of art are of an infinite solitude, and no means of approach is so useless as criticism. Only love can touch and

hold them and be fair to them.—Always trust yourself and your own feeling, as opposed to argumentations, discussions, or introductions of that sort; if it turns out that you are wrong, then the natural growth of your inner life will eventually guide you to other insights. Allow your judgments their own silent, undisturbed development, which, like all progress, must come from deep within and cannot be forced or hastened. Everything is gestation and then birthing. To let each impression and each embryo of a feeling come to completion, entirely in itself, in the dark, in the unsayable, the unconscious, beyond the reach of one's own understanding, and with deep humility and patience to wait for the hour when a new clarity is born: this alone is what it means to live as an artist: in understanding as in creating.

In this there is no measuring with time, a year doesn't matter, and ten years are nothing. Being an artist means: not numbering and counting, but ripening like a tree, which doesn't force its sap, and stands confidently in the storms of spring, not afraid that afterward summer may not come. It does come. But it comes only to those who are patient, who are there as if eternity lay before them, so unconcernedly silent and vast. I learn it every day of my life, learn it with pain I am grateful for: patience is everything!

Richard Dehmel: My experience with his books (and also, incidentally, with the man, whom I know slightly) is that whenever I have discovered one of his beautiful pages, I am always afraid that the next one will destroy the whole effect and change what is admirable into something unworthy. You have characterized him quite well with the phrase: "living and writing in heat."—And in fact the artist's experience lies so unbelievably close to the sexual, to its pain and its pleasure, that the two phenomena are really just different forms of one and the same longing and bliss. And if instead of "heat" one could say "sex"—sex in the great, pure sense of the word, free of any sin attached to it by the Church—then his art would be very great and infinitely important. His poetic power is great and as strong as a primal instinct; it has its own relentless rhythms in itself explodes from him like a volcano.

But this power does not always seem completely straightforward and without pose. (But that is one of the most difficult tests for the creator: he must always remain unconscious, unaware of his best virtues, if he doesn't want to rob them of their candor and innocence!) And then, when, thundering through his being, it arrives at the sexual, it finds someone who is not quite so pure as it needs him to be. Instead of a completely ripe and pure world of sexuality, it finds a world that is not human enough, that is only male, is heat, thunder, and restlessness, and burdened with the old prejudice and arrogance with which the male has always disfigured and burdened love. Because he loves only as a male, and not as a human being, there is something narrow in his sexual feeling, something that seems wild, malicious, time-bound, uneternal, which diminishes his art and makes it ambiguous and doubtful. It is not immaculate, it is marked by time and by passion, and little of it will endure. (But most art is like that!) Even so, one can deeply enjoy what is great in it, only one must not get lost in it and become a hanger-on of Dehmel's world, which is so infinitely afraid, filled with adultery and confusion, and is far from the real fates, which make one suffer more than these time-bound afflictions do, but also give one more opportunity for greatness and more courage for eternity.

Finally, as to my own books, I wish I could send you any of them that might give you pleasure. But I am very poor, and my books, as soon as they are published, no longer belong to me. I can't even afford them myself—and, as I would so often like to, give them to those who would be kind to them.

So I am writing for you, on another slip of paper, the titles (and publishers) of my most recent books (the newest ones—all together I have published perhaps 12 or 13), and must leave it to you, dear Sir, to order one or two of them when you can.

I am glad that my books will be in your good hands.

With best wishes,

Yours,
Rainer Maria Rilke



Worpswede, near Bremen
July 16, 1903

About ten days ago I left Paris, tired and quite sick, and traveled to this great northern plain, whose vastness and silence and sky ought to make me well again. But I arrived during a long period of rain; this is the first day it has begun to let up over the restlessly blowing landscape, and I am taking advantage of this moment of brightness to greet you, dear Sir.

My dear Mr. Kappus: I have left a letter from you unanswered for a long time; not because I had forgotten it—on the contrary: it is the kind that one reads again when one finds it among other letters, and I recognize you in it as if you were very near. It is your letter of May 2nd, and I am sure you remember it. As I read it now, in the great silence of these distances, I am touched by your beautiful anxiety about life, even more than I was in Paris, where everything echoes and fades away differently because of the excessive noise that makes Things tremble. Here, where I am surrounded by an enormous landscape, which the winds move across as they come from the seas, here I feel that there is no one anywhere who can answer for you those questions and feelings which, in their depths, have a life of their own; for even the most articulate people are unable to help, since what words point to is so very delicate, is almost unsayable. But even so, I think that you will not have to remain without a solution if you trust in Things that are like the ones my eyes are now resting upon. If you trust in Nature, in the small Things that hardly anyone sees and that can so suddenly become huge, immeasurable; if you have this love for what is humble and try very simply, as someone who serves, to win the confidence of what seems poor: then everything will become easier for you, more coherent and somehow more reconciling, not in your conscious mind perhaps, which stays behind, astonished, but in your innermost awareness, awakeness, and knowledge. You are so young, so much before all beginning, and I would like to beg you, dear Sir, as well as I can, to have patience with everything unresolved in your heart and to try to love the questions themselves as if they were locked rooms or books written in a very foreign language. Don't search for the answers, which could not be given to you now, because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps then, someday far in the future, you will gradually, without even noticing it, live your way into the answer. Perhaps you do carry within you the possibility of creating and forming, as an especially blessed and pure way of living; train yourself for that—but take whatever comes, with great trust, and as long as it

comes out of your will, out of some need of your innermost self, then take it upon yourself, and don't hate anything. Sex is difficult; yes. But those tasks that have been entrusted to us are difficult; almost everything serious is difficult; and everything is serious. If you just recognize this and manage, out of yourself, out of your own talent and nature, out of your own experience and childhood and strength, to achieve a wholly individual relation to sex (one that is not influenced by convention and custom), then you will no longer have to be afraid of losing yourself and becoming unworthy of your dearest possession.

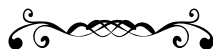
Bodily delight is a sensory experience, not any different from pure looking or the feeling with which a beautiful fruit fills the tongue; it is a great, an infinite learning that is given to us, a knowledge of the world, the fullness and the splendor of all knowledge. And it is not our acceptance of it that is bad; what is bad is that most people misuse this learning and squander it and apply it as a stimulant on the tired places of their lives and as a distraction rather than as a way of gathering themselves for their highest moments. People have even made eating into something else: necessity on the one hand, excess on the other; have muddled the clarity of this need, and all the deep, simple needs in which life renews itself have become just as muddy. But the individual can make them clear for himself and live them clearly (not the individual who is dependent, but the solitary man). He can remember that all beauty in animals and plants is a silent, enduring form of love and yearning, and he can see the animal, as he sees plants, patiently and willingly uniting and multiplying and growing, not out of physical pleasure, not out of physical pain, but bowing to necessities that are greater than pleasure and pain, and more powerful than will and withstanding. If only human beings could more humbly receive this mystery—which the world is filled with, even in its smallest Things—, could bear it, endure it, more solemnly, feel how terribly heavy it is, instead of taking it lightly. If only they could be more reverent toward their own fruitfulness, which is essentially one, whether it is manifested as mental or physical; for mental creation too arises from the physical, is of one nature with it and only like a softer, more enraptured and more eternal repetition of bodily delight. “The thought of being a creator, of engendering, of shaping” is nothing without the continuous great confirmation and embodiment in the world, nothing without the thousandfold assent from Things and animals—and our enjoyment of it is so indescribably beautiful and rich only because it is full of inherited memories of the engendering and birthing of millions. In one creative thought a thousand forgotten nights of love come to life again and fill it with majesty and exaltation. And those who come together in the nights and are entwined in rocking delight perform a solemn task and gather sweetness, depth, and strength for the song of some future poets, who will appear in order to say ecstasies that are unsayable. And they call forth the future; and even if they have made a mistake and embrace blindly, the future comes anyway, a new human being arises, and on the foundation of the accident that seems to be accomplished here, there awakens the law by which a strong, determined seed forces its way through to the egg cell that openly advances to meet it. Don't be confused by surfaces; in the depths everything becomes law. And those who live the mystery falsely and badly (and they are very many) lose it only for themselves and nevertheless pass it on like a sealed letter, without knowing it. And don't be puzzled by how many names there are and how complex each life seems. Perhaps above them all there is a great motherhood, in the form of a communal yearning. The beauty of the girl, a being who (as you so beautifully say) “has not yet achieved anything,” is motherhood that has a presentiment of itself and

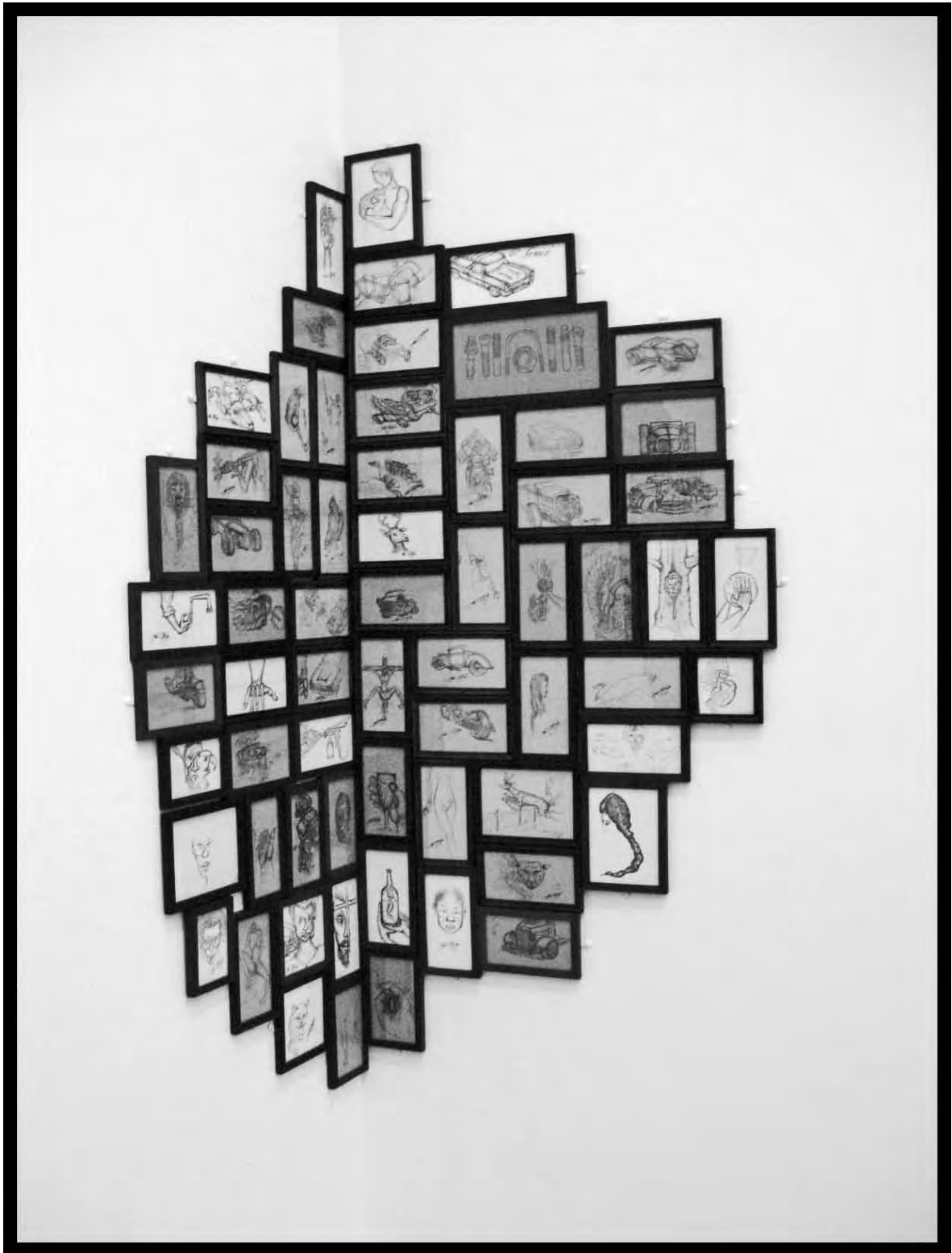
begins to prepare, becomes anxious, yearns. And the mother's beauty is motherhood that serves, and in the old woman there is a great remembering. And in the man too there is motherhood, it seems to me, physical and mental; his engendering is also a kind of birthing, and it is birthing when he creates out of his innermost fullness. And perhaps the sexes are more akin than people think, and the great renewal of the world will perhaps consist in one phenomenon: that man and woman, freed from all mistaken feelings and aversions, will seek each other not as opposites but as brother and sister, as neighbors, and will unite as human beings, in order to bear in common, simply, earnestly, and patiently, the heavy sex that has been laid upon them.

But everything that may someday be possible for many people, the solitary man can now, already, prepare and build with his own hands, which make fewer mistakes. Therefore, dear Sir, love your solitude and try to sing out with the pain it causes you. For those who are near you are far away, you write, and this shows that the space around you is beginning to grow vast. And if what is near you is far away, then your vastness is already among the stars and is very great; be happy about your growth, in which of course you can't take anyone with you, and be gentle with those who stay behind; be confident and calm in front of them and don't torment them with your doubts and don't frighten them with your faith or joy, which they wouldn't be able to comprehend. Seek out some simple and true feeling of what you have in common with them, which doesn't necessarily have to alter when you yourself change again and again; when you see them, love life in a form that is not your own and be indulgent toward those who are growing old, who are afraid of the aloneness that you trust. Avoid providing material for the drama that is always stretched tight between parents and children; it uses up much of the children's strength and wastes the love of the elders, which acts and warns even if it doesn't comprehend. Don't ask for any advice from them and don't expect any understanding; but believe in a love that is being stored up for you like and inheritance, and have faith that in this love there is a strength and a blessing so large that you can travel as far as you wish without having to step outside it.

It is good that you will soon be entering a profession that will make you independent and will put you completely on your own, in every sense. Wait patiently to see whether your innermost life feels hemmed in by the form this profession imposes. I myself consider it a very difficult and very exacting one, since it is burdened with enormous conventions and leaves very little room for a personal interpretation of its duties. But your solitude will be a support and a home for you, even in the midst of very unfamiliar circumstances, and from it you will find all your paths. All my good wishes are ready to accompany you, and my faith is with you.

Yours,
Rainer Maria Rilke





Rome
October 29, 1903

Dear Sir,

I received your letter of August 29 in Florence, and it has taken me this long—two months—to answer. Please forgive this tardiness—but I don't like to write letters while I am traveling, because for letter writing I need more than the most necessary tools: some silence and solitude and a not too familiar hour.

We arrived in Rome about six weeks ago, at a time when it was still empty, the hot, the notoriously feverish Rome, and this circumstance, along with other practical difficulties in finding a place to live, helped make the restlessness around us seem as if it would never end, and the unfamiliarity lay upon us with the weight of homelessness. In addition, Rome (if one has not yet become acquainted with it) makes one feel stifled with sadness for the first few days: through the gloomy and lifeless museum-atmosphere that it exhales, through the abundance of its pasts, which are brought forth and laboriously held up (pasts on which a tiny present subsists), through the terrible overvaluing, sustained by scholars and philologists and imitated by the ordinary tourist in Italy, of all the disfigured and decaying Things, which, after all, are essentially nothing more than accidental remains from another time and from a life that is not and should not be ours. Finally, after weeks of daily resistance, one finds oneself somewhat composed again, even though still a bit confused, and one says to oneself: No, there is not more beauty here than in other places, and all these objects, which have been marveled at by generation after generation, mended and restored by the hands of workmen, mean nothing, are nothing, and have no heart and no value;—but there is much beauty here, because everywhere there is much beauty. Waters infinitely full of life move along the ancient aqueducts into the great city and dance in the many city squares over white basins of stone and spread out in large, spacious pools and murmur by day and lift up their murmuring to the night, which is vast here and starry and soft with winds. And there are gardens here, unforgettable boulevards, and staircases designed by Michelangelo, staircases constructed on the pattern of downward-gliding waters and, as they descend, widely giving birth to step out of wave. Through such impressions one gathers oneself, wins oneself back from the exacting multiplicity, which speaks and chatters there (and how talkative it is!), and one slowly learns to recognize the very few Things in which something eternal endures that one can love and something solitary that one can gently take part in.

I am still living in the city, on the Capitol, not far from the most beautiful equestrian statue that has come down to us from Roman art—the statue of Marcus Aurelius; but in a few weeks I will move into a quiet, simple room, an old summerhouse, which lies lost deep in a large park, hidden from the city, from its noises and incidents. There I will live all winter and enjoy the great silence, from which I expect the gift of happy, work-filled hours . . .

From there, where I will be more at home, I will write you a longer letter, in which I will say something more about what you wrote me. Today I just need to tell you (and perhaps I am wrong not to have done this sooner) that the book you sent me (you said in your letter that it contained some works of yours) hasn't arrived. Was it sent back to you, perhaps from Worspwede? (They will not forward packages to foreign countries.) This is the most hopeful possibility, and I would be glad to have it confirmed. I do hope that the package hasn't been lost—unfortunately, the Italian mail service being what it is, that would

not be anything unusual.

I would have been glad to have this book (as I am to have anything that comes from you); and any poems that have arisen in the meantime. I will always (if you entrust them to me) read and read again and experience as well and sincerely as I can. With greetings and good wishes,

Yours,
Rainer Maria Rilke



Rome
December 23, 1903

My dear Mr. Kappus,

I don't want you to be without a greeting from me when Christmas comes and when you, in the midst of the holiday, are bearing your solitude more heavily than usual. But when you notice that it is vast, you should be happy; for what (you should ask yourself) would a solitude be that was not vast; there is only one solitude, and it is vast, heavy, difficult to bear, and almost everyone has hours when he would gladly exchange it for any kind of sociability, however trivial or cheap, for the tiniest outward agreement with the first person who comes along, the most unworthy . . . But perhaps these are the very hours during which solitude grows; for its growing is painful as the growing of boys and sad as the beginning of spring. But that must not confuse you. What is necessary, after all, is only this: solitude, vast inner solitude. To walk inside yourself and meet no one for hours—that is what you must be able to attain. To be solitary as you were when you were a child, when the grown-ups walked around involved with matters that seemed large and important because they looked so busy and because you didn't understand a thing about what they were doing.

And when you realize that their activities are shabby, that their vocations are petrified and no longer connected with life, why not then continue to look upon it all as a child would, as if you were looking at something unfamiliar, out of the depths of your own solitude, which is itself work and status and vocation? Why should you want to give up a child's wise not-understanding in exchange for defensiveness and scorn, since not-understanding is, after all, a way of being alone, whereas defensiveness and scorn are participation in precisely what, by these means, you want to separate yourself from.

Think, dear Sir, of the world that you carry inside you, and call this thinking whatever you want to: a remembering of your own childhood or a yearning toward a future of your own—only be attentive to what is arising within you, and place that above everything you perceive around you. What is happening on your innermost self is worthy of your entire love; somehow you must find a way to work at it, and not lose too much time or too much courage in clarifying your attitude toward people. Who says that you have any attitude at all?—I know, your profession is hard and full of things that contradict you, and I foresaw your lament and knew that it would come. Now that it has come, there is nothing I can say to reassure you, I can only suggest that perhaps all professions are like that, filled with

demands, filled with hostility toward the individual, saturated as it were with the hatred of those who find themselves mute and sullen in an insipid duty. The situation you must live in now is not more heavily burdened with conventions, prejudices, and false ideas than all the other situations, and if there are some that pretend to offer a greater freedom, there is nevertheless none that is, in itself, vast and spacious and connected to the important Things that the truest kind of life consists of. Only the individual who is solitary is placed under the deepest laws like a Thing, and when he walks out into the rising dawn or looks out into the event-filled evening and when he feels what is happening there, all situations drop from him as if from a dead man, though he stands in the midst of pure life. What you, dear Mr. Kappus, now have to experience as an officer, you would have felt in just the same way in any of the established professions; yes, even if, outside any position, you had simply tried to find some easy and independent contact with society, this feeling of being hemmed in would not have been spared you.—It is like this everywhere; but that is no cause for anxiety or sadness; if there is nothing you can share with other people, try to be close to Things; they will not abandon you; and the nights are still there, and the winds that move through the trees and across many lands; everything in the world of Things and animals is still filled with happening, which you can take part in; and children are still the way you were as a child, sad and happy in just the same way—and if you think of your childhood, you once again live among them, and the grown-ups are nothing, and their dignity has no value.

And if it frightens and torments you to think of childhood and of the simplicity and silence that accompanies it, because you can no longer believe in God, who appears in it everywhere, then ask yourself, dear Mr. Kappus, whether you have really lost God. Isn't it much truer to say that you have never yet possessed him? For when could that have been? Do you think that a child can hold him, him whom grown men bear only with great effort and whose weight crushes the old? Do you suppose that someone who really has him could lose him like a little stone? Or don't you think that someone who once had him could only be lost by him?—But if you realize that he did not exist in your childhood, and did not exist previously, if you suspect that Christ was deluded by his yearning and Muhammad deceived by his pride—and if you are terrified to feel that even now he does not exist, even at this moment when we are talking about him—what justifies you then, if he never existed, in missing him like someone who has passed away and in searching for him as though he were lost?

Why don't you think of him as the one who is coming, who has been approaching from all eternity, the one who will someday arrive, the ultimate fruit of a tree whose leaves we are? What keeps you from projecting his birth into the ages that are coming into existence, and living your life as a painful and lovely day in the history of a great pregnancy? Don't you see how everything that happens is again and again a beginning, and couldn't it be His beginning, since, in itself, starting is always so beautiful? If he is the most perfect one, must not what is less perfect precede him, so that he can choose himself out of fullness and superabundance?—Must not he be the last one, so that he can include everything in himself, and what meaning would we have if he whom we are longing for has already existed?

As bees gather honey, so we collect what is sweetest out of all things and build Him. Even with the trivial, with the insignificant (as long as it is done out of love) we begin, with work and with the repose that comes afterward, with a silence or with a small solitary joy, with everything that we do alone, without anyone to join or help us, we start Him whom

we will not live to see, just as our ancestors could not live to see us. And yet they, who passed away long ago, still exist in us, as predisposition, as burden upon our fate, as murmuring blood, and as gesture that rises up from the depths of time.

Is there anything that can deprive you of the hope that in this way you will someday exist in Him, who is the farthest, the outermost limit?

Dear Mr. Kappus, celebrate Christmas in this devout feeling, that perhaps He needs this very anguish of yours in order to come to being; these very days of your transition are perhaps the time when everything in you is working at Him, as you once worked at Him in your childhood, breathlessly. Be patient and without bitterness, and realize that the least we can do is to make coming into existence no more difficult for Him than the earth does for spring when it wants to come.

And be glad and confident.

Yours,
Rainer Maria Rilke



Rome
May 14, 1904

My dear Mr. Kappus,

Much time has passed since I received your last letter. Please don't hold that against me; first it was work, then a number of interruptions, and finally poor health that again and again kept me from answering, because I wanted my answer to come to you out of peaceful and happy days. Now I feel somewhat better again (the beginning of spring with its moody, bad-tempered transitions was hard to bear here too) and once again, dear Mr. Kappus, I can greet you and talk to you (which I do with real pleasure) about this and that in response to your letter, as well as I can.

You see: I have copied out your sonnet, because I found that it is lovely and simple born in the shape that it moves in with such quiet decorum. It is the best poem of yours that you have let me read. And now I am giving you this copy because I know that it is important and full of new experience to rediscover a work of one's own in someone else's handwriting. Read the poem as if you had never seen it before, and you will feel in your innermost being how very much it is your own.

It was a pleasure for me to read this sonnet and your letter, often; I thank you for both.

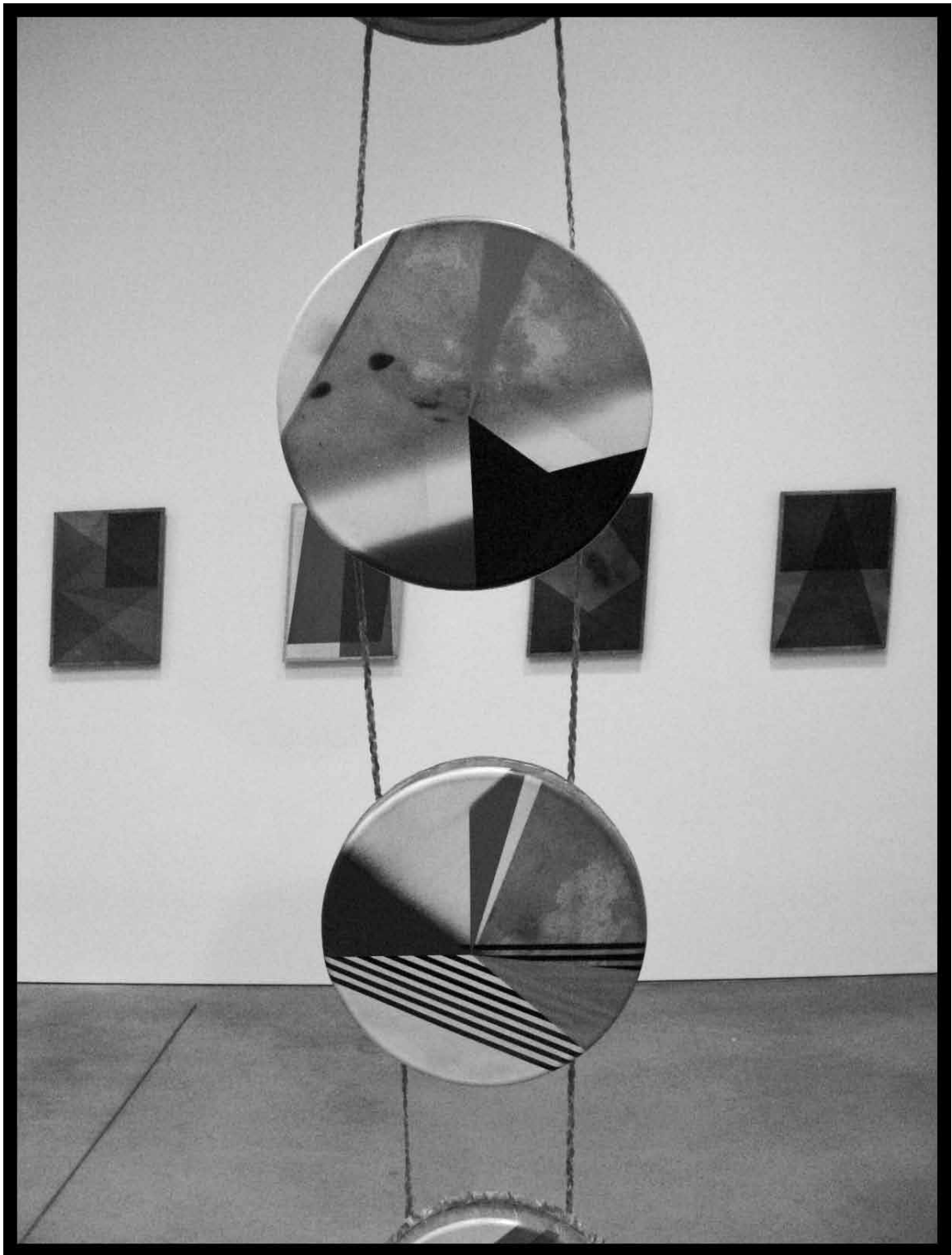
And you should not let yourself be confused in your solitude by the fact that there is something in you that wants to move out of it. This very wish, if you use it calmly and prudently and like a tool, will help you spread out your solitude over a great distance. Most people have (with the help of conventions) turned their solutions toward what is easy and toward the easiest side of the easy; but it is clear that we must trust in what is difficult; everything alive trusts in it, everything in Nature grows and defends itself any way it can and is spontaneously itself, tries to be itself at all costs and against all opposition. We know little, but that we must trust in what is difficult as a certainty that will never abandon us; it

is good to be solitary, for solitude is difficult; that something is difficult must be one more reason for us to do it.

It is also good to love: because love is difficult. For one human being to love another human being: that is perhaps the most difficult task that has been entrusted to us, the ultimate task, the final test and proof, the work for which all other work is merely preparation. That is why young people, who are beginners in everything, are not yet capable of love: it is something they must learn. With their whole being, with all their forces, gathered around their solitary, anxious, upward-beating heart, they must learn to love. But learning-time is always a long, secluded time ahead and far on into life, is—; solitude, a heightened and deepened kind of aloneness for the person who loves. Loving does not at first mean merging, surrendering, and uniting with another person (for what would a union be of two people who are unclarified, unfinished, and still incoherent—?), it is a high inducement for the individual to ripen, to become something in himself, to become world, to become world in himself for the sake of another person; it is a great, demanding claim on him, something that chooses him and calls him to vast distances. Only in this sense, as the task of working on themselves (“to hearken and to hammer day and night”), may young people use the love that is given to them. Merging and surrendering and every kind of communion is not for them (who must still, for a long, long time, save and gather themselves); it is the ultimate, is perhaps that for which human lives are as yet barely large enough.

But this is what young people are so often and so disastrously wrong in doing they (who by their very nature are impatient) fling themselves at each other when love takes hold of them, they scatter themselves, just as they are, in all their messiness, disorder, bewilderment . . . : And what can happen then? What can life do with this heap of half-broken things that they call their communion and that they would like to call their happiness, if that were possible, and their future? And so each of them loses himself for the sake of the other person, and loses the other, and many others who still wanted to come. And loses the vast distances and possibilities, gives up the approaching and fleeing of gentle, prescient Things in exchange for an unfruitful confusion, out of which nothing more can come; nothing but a bit of disgust, disappointment, and poverty, and the escape into one of the many conventions that have been put up in great numbers like public shelters on this most dangerous road. No area of human experience is so extensively provided with conventions as this one is: there are live-preservers of the most varied invention, boats and water wings; society has been able to create refuges of every sort, for since it preferred to take love-life as an amusement, it also had to give it an easy form, cheap, safe, and sure, as public amusements are.

It is true that many young people who love falsely, i.e., simply surrendering themselves and giving up their solitude (the average person will of course always go on doing that—), feel oppressed by their failure and want to make the situation they have landed in livable and fruitful in their own, personal way—. For their nature tells them that the questions of love, even more than everything else that is important, cannot be resolved publicly and according to this or that agreement; that they are questions, intimate questions from one human being to another, which in any case require a new, special, wholly personal answer—. But how can they, who have already flung themselves together and can no longer tell whose outlines are whose, who thus no longer possess anything of their won, how can they find a way out of themselves, out of the depths of their already buried solitude?



They act out of mutual helplessness, and then if, with the best of intentions, they try to escape the conventions that is approaching them (marriage, for example), they fall into the clutches of some less obvious but just as deadly conventional solution. For then everything around them is—convention. Wherever people act out of a prematurely fused, muddy communion, every action is conventional: every relation that such confusion leads to has its own convention, however unusual (i.e., in the ordinary sense immoral) it may be; even separating would be a conventional step, an impersonal, accidental decision without strength and without fruit.

Whoever looks seriously will find that neither for death, which is difficult, nor for difficult love, has any clarification, any solution, any hint of a path been perceived; and for both these tasks, which we carry wrapped up and hand on without opening, there is not general, agreed-upon rule that can be discovered. But in the same measure in which we begin to test life as individuals, these great Things will come to meet us, the individuals, with greater intimacy. The claims that the difficult work of love makes upon our development are greater than life, and we, as beginners, are not equal to them. But if we nevertheless endure and take this love upon us as burden and apprenticeship, instead of losing ourselves in the whole easy and frivolous game behind which people have hidden from the most solemn solemnity of their being,—then a small advance and a lightening will perhaps be perceptible to those who come long after us. That would be much.

We are only just now beginning to consider the relation of one individual to a second individual objectively and without prejudice, and our attempts to live such relationships have no model before them. And yet in the changes that time has brought about there are already many things that can help our timid novitiate.

The girl and the woman, in their new, individual unfolding, will only in passing be imitators of male behavior and misbehavior and repeaters of male professions. After the uncertainty of such transitions, it will become obvious that women were going through the abundance and variation of those (often ridiculous) disguises just so that they could purify their own essential nature and wash out the deforming influences of the other sex. Women, in whom life lingers and dwells more immediately, more fruitfully, and more confidently, must surely have become riper and more human in their depths than light, easygoing man, who is not pulled down beneath the surface of life by the weight of any bodily fruit and who, arrogant and hasty, undervalues what he thinks he loves. This humanity of woman, carried in her womb through all her suffering and humiliation, will come to light when she has stripped off the conventions of mere femaleness in the transformations of her outward status, and those men who do not yet feel it approaching will be astonished by it. Someday (and even now, especially in the countries of northern Europe, trustworthy signs are already speaking and shining), someday there will be girls and women whose name will no longer mean the mere opposite of the male, but something in itself, something that makes one think not of any complement and limit, but only life and reality: the female human being.

This advance (at first very much against the will of the outdistanced men) will transform the love experience, which is now filled with error, will change it from the ground up, and reshape it into a relationship that is meant to be between one human being and another, no longer one that flows from man to woman. And this more human love (which will fulfill itself with infinite consideration and gentleness, and kindness and clarity in binding and releasing) will resemble what we are now preparing painfully and with great

struggle: the love that consists in this: the two solitudes protect and border and greet each other.

And one more thing: Don't think that the great love which was once granted to you, when you were a boy, has been lost; how can you know whether vast and generous wishes didn't ripen in you at that time, and purposes by which you are still living today? I believe that that love remains strong and intense in your memory because it was your first deep aloneness and the first inner work that you did on your life.—All good wishes to you, dear Mr. Kappus!

Yours,
Rainer Maria Rilke



Borgebygard, Fladie, Sweden
August 12, 1904

I want to talk to you again for a little while, dear Mr. Kappus, although there is almost nothing I can say that will help you, and I can hardly find one useful word. You have had many sadnesses, large ones, which passed. And you say that even this passing was difficult and upsetting for you. But please, ask yourself whether these large sadnesses haven't rather gone right through you. Perhaps many things inside you have been transformed; perhaps somewhere, deep inside your being, you have undergone important changes while you were sad. The only sadnesses that are dangerous and unhealthy are the ones that we carry around in public in order to drown them out with the noise; like diseases that are treated superficially and foolishly, they just withdraw and after a short interval break out again all the more terribly; and gather inside us and are life, are life that is un-lived, rejected, lost, life that we can die of. If only it were possible for us to see farther than our knowledge reaches, and even a little beyond the outworks of our presentiment, perhaps we would bear our sadnesses with greater trust than we have in our joys. For they are the moments when something new has entered us, something unknown; our feelings grow mute in shy embarrassment, everything in us withdraws, a silence arises, and the new experience, which no one knows, stands in the midst of it all and says nothing.

It seems to me that almost all our sadnesses are moments of tension, which we feel as paralysis because we no longer hear our astonished emotions living. Because we are alone with the unfamiliar presence that has entered us; because everything we trust and are used to is for a moment taken away from us; because we stand in the midst of a transition where we cannot remain standing. That is why the sadness passes: the new presence inside us, the presence that has been added, has entered our heart, has gone into its innermost chamber and is no longer even there,—is already in our bloodstream. And we don't know what it was. We could easily be made to believe that nothing happened, and yet we have changed, as a house that a guest has entered changes. We can't say who has come, perhaps we will never know, but many signs indicate that the future enters us in this way in order to be transformed in us, long before it happens. And that is why it is so important to be solitary and attentive when one is sad: because the seemingly uneventful and motionless moment

when our future steps into us is so much closer to life than that other loud and accidental point of time when it happens to us as if from outside. The quieter we are, the more patient and open we are in our sadnesses, the more deeply and serenely the new presence can enter us, and the more we can make it our own, the more it becomes our fate; and later on, when it “happens” (that is, steps forth out of us to other people), we will feel related and close to it in our innermost being. And that is necessary. It is necessary—and toward this point our development will move, little by little—that nothing alien happen to us, but only what has long been our own. People have already had to rethink so many concepts of motion; and they will also gradually come to realize that what we call fate does not come into us from the outside, but emerges from us. It is only because so many people have not absorbed and transformed their fates while they were living in them that they have not realized what was emerging from them; it was so alien to them that they have not realized what was emerging from them; it was so alien to them that, in their confusion and fear, they thought it must have entered them at the very moment they became aware of it, for they swore they had never before found anything like that inside them. Just as people for a long time had a wrong idea about the sun’s motion, they are even now wrong about the motion of what is to come. The future stands still, dear Mr. Kappus, but we move in infinite space.

How could it not be difficult for us?

And to speak of solitude again, it becomes clearer and clearer that fundamentally this is nothing that one can choose or refrain from. We are solitary. We can delude ourselves about this and act as if it were not true. That is all. But how much better it is to recognize that we are alone; yes, even to begin from this realization. It will, of course, make us dizzy; for all points that our eyes used to rest on are taken away from us, there is no longer anything near us, and everything far away is infinitely far. A man taken out of his room and, almost without preparation or transition, placed on the heights of a great mountain range, would feel something like that: an unequalled insecurity, an abandonment to the nameless, would almost annihilate him. He would feel he was falling or think he was being catapulted out into space or exploded into a thousand pieces: what a colossal lie his brain would have to invent in order to catch up with and explain the situation of his senses. That is how all distances, all measures, change for the person who becomes solitary; many of these changes occur suddenly and then, as with the man on the mountaintop, unusual fantasies and strange feelings arise, which seem to grow out beyond all that is bearable. But it is necessary for us to experience that too. We must accept our reality as vastly as we possibly can; everything, even the unprecedented, must be possible within it. This is in the end the only kind of courage that is required of us: the courage to face the strangest, most unusual, most inexplicable experiences that can meet us. The fact that people have in this sense been cowardly has done infinite harm to life; the experiences that are called “apparitions,” the whole so-called “spirit world,” death, all these Things that are so closely related to us, have through our daily defensiveness been so entirely pushed out of life that the senses with which we might have been able to grasp them have atrophied. To say nothing of God. But the fear of the inexplicable has not only impoverished the reality of the individual; it has also narrowed the relationship between one human being and another, which has as it were been lifted out of the riverbed of infinite possibilities and set down in a fallow place on the bank, where nothing happens. For it is not only indolence that causes human relationships to be repeated from case to case with such unspeakable monotony and boredom; it is timidity

before any new, inconceivable experience, which we don't think we can deal with. But only someone who is ready for everything, who doesn't exclude any experience, even the most incomprehensible, will live the relationship with another person as something alive and will himself sound the depths of his own being. For if we imagine this being of the individual as a larger or smaller room, it is obvious that most people come to know only one corner of their room, one spot near the window, one narrow strip on which they keep walking back and forth. In this way they have a certain security. And yet how much more human is the dangerous insecurity that drives those prisoners in Poe's stories to feel out the shapes of their horrible dungeons and not be strangers to the unspeakable terror of their cells. We, however, are not prisoners. No traps or snares have been set around us, and there is nothing that should frighten or upset us. We have been put into life as into the element we most accord with, and we have, moreover, through thousands of years of adaptation, come to resemble this life so greatly that when we hold still, through a fortunate mimicry we can hardly be differentiated from everything around us. We have no reason to harbor any mistrust against our world, for it is not against us. If it has terrors, they are our terrors; if it has abysses, these abysses belong to us; if there are dangers, we must try to love them. And if only we arrange our life in accordance with the principle which tells us that we must always trust in the difficult, then what now appears to us as the most alien will become our most intimate and trusted experience. How could we forget those ancient myths that stand at the beginning of all races, the myths about dragons that at the last moment are transformed into princesses? Perhaps all the dragons in our lives are princesses who are only waiting to see us act, just once, with beauty and courage. Perhaps everything that frightens us is, in its deepest essence, something helpless that wants our love.

So you mustn't be frightened, dear Mr. Kappus, if a sadness rises in front of you, larger than any you have ever seen; if an anxiety, like light and cloud-shadows, moves over your hands and over everything you do. You must realize that something is happening to you, that life has not forgotten you, that it holds you in its hand and will not let you fall. Why do you want to shut out of your life any uneasiness, any misery, any depression, since after all you don't know what work these conditions are doing inside you? Why do you want to persecute yourself with the question of where all this is coming from and where it is going? Since you know, after all, that you are in the midst of transitions and you wished for nothing so much as to change. If there is anything unhealthy in your reactions, just bear in mind that sickness is the means by which an organism frees itself from what is alien; so one must simply help it to be sick, to have its whole sickness and to break out with it, since that is the way it gets better. In you, dear Mr. Kappus, so much is happening now; you must be patient like someone who is sick, and confident like someone who is recovering; for perhaps you are both. And more: you are also the doctor, who has to watch over himself. But in every sickness there are many days when the doctor can do nothing but wait. And that is what you, insofar as you are your own doctor, must now do, more than anything else.

Don't observe yourself too closely. Don't be too quick to draw conclusions from what happens to you; simply let it happen. Otherwise it will be too easy for you to look with blame (that is: morally) at your past, which naturally has a share in everything that now meets you. But whatever errors, wishes, and yearnings of your boyhood are operating in you now are not what you remember and condemn. The extraordinary circumstances of a solitary and helpless childhood are so difficult, so complicated, surrendered to so many influences

and at the same time so cut off from all real connection with life that, where a vice enters it, one may not simply call it a vice. One must be so careful with names anyway; it is so often the name of an offense that a life shatters upon, not the nameless and personal action itself, which was perhaps a quite definite necessity of that life and could have been absorbed by it without any trouble. And the expenditure of energy seems to you so great only because you overvalue victory; it is not the “great thing” that you think you have achieved, although you are right about your feeling; the great thing is that there was already something there which you could replace that deception with, something true and real. Without this even your victory would have been just a moral reaction of no great significance; but in fact it has become a part of your life. Your life, dear Mr. Kappus, which I think of with so many good wishes. Do you remember how that life yearned out of childhood toward the “great thing”? I see that it is now yearning forth beyond the great thing toward the greater one. That is why it does not cease to be difficult, but that is also why it will not cease to grow.

And if there is one more thing that I must say to you, it is this: Don't think that the person who is trying to comfort you now lives untroubled among the simple and quiet words that sometimes give you much pleasure. His life has much trouble and sadness, and remains far behind yours. If it were otherwise, he would never have been able to find those words.

Yours,
Rainer Maria Rilke



Furuborg, Jonsered, in Sweden
November 4, 1904

My dear Mr. Kappus,

During this time that has passed without a letter, I have been partly traveling, partly so busy that I couldn't write. And even today writing is difficult for me, because I have already had to write so many letters that my hand is tired. If I could dictate, I would have much more to say to you, but as it is, please accept these few words as an answer to your long letter.

I think of you often, dear Mr. Kappus, and with such concentrated good wishes that somehow they ought to help you. Whether my letters really are a help, I often doubt. Don't say, “Yes, they are.” Just accept them calmly and without many thanks, and let us wait for what wants to come.

There is probably no point in my going into your questions now; for what I could say about your tendency to doubt or about your inability to bring your outer and inner lives into harmony or about all the other thing that oppress you—: is just what I have already said: just the wish that you may find in yourself enough patience to endure and enough simplicity to have faith; that you may gain more and more confidence in what is difficult and in your solitude among other people. And as for the rest, let life happen to you. Believe me: life is in the right, always.

And about feelings: All feelings that concentrate you and lift you up are pure;



only that feeling is impure which grasps just one side of your being and thus distorts you. Everything you can think of as you face your childhood, is good. Everything that makes more of you than you have ever been, even in your best hours, is right. Every intensification is good, if it is in your entire blood, if it isn't intoxication or muddiness, but joy which you can see into, clear to the bottom. Do you understand what I mean?

And your doubt can become a good quality if you train it. It must become knowing, it must become criticism. Ask it, whenever it wants to spoil something for you, why something is ugly, demand proofs from it, test it, and you will find it perhaps bewildered and embarrassed, perhaps also protesting. But don't give in, insist on arguments, and act in this way, attentive and persistent, every single time, and the day will come when instead of being a destroyer, it will become one of your best workers—perhaps the most intelligent of all the ones that are building your life.

That is all, dear Mr. Kappus, that I am able to tell you today. But I am sending you, along with this letter, the reprint of a small poem that has just appeared in the *Prague German Labor*. In it I speak to you further of life and death and of how both are great and glorious.

Yours,
Rainer Maria Rilke



Paris
The day after Christmas, 1908

You must know, dear Mr. Kappus, how glad I was to have the lovely letter from you. The news that you give me, real and expressible as it now is again, seems to me good news, and the longer I thought it over, the more I felt that it was very good news indeed. That is really what I wanted to write you for Christmas Eve; but I have been variously and uninterruptedly living in my work this winter, and the ancient holiday arrived so quickly that I hardly had enough time to do the most necessary errands, much less to write.

But I have thought of you often during this holiday and imagined how silent you must be in your solitary fort amongst the empty hills, upon which those large southern winds fling themselves as if they wanted to devour them in large pieces.

It must be immense, this silence, in which sounds and movements have room, and if one thinks that along with all this the presence of the distant sea also resounds, perhaps as the innermost note in this prehistoric harmony, then one can only wish that you are trustingly and patiently letting the magnificent solitude work upon you, this solitude which can no longer be erased from your life; which, in everything that is in store for you to experience and to do, will act as an anonymous influence, continuously and gently decisive, rather as the blood of our ancestors incessantly moves in us and combines with our own to form the unique, unrepeatable being that we are at every turning of our life.

Yes: I am glad you have that firm, sayable existence with you, that title, that uniform, that service, all that tangible and limited world, which in such surroundings, with such an isolated and not numerous body of men, takes on seriousness and necessity, and implies a

vigilant application, above and beyond the frivolity and mere time-passing of the military profession, and not only permits a self-reliant attentiveness but actually cultivates it. And to be in circumstances that are working upon us, that from time to time place us in front of great natural Things—that is all we need.

Art too is just a way of living, and however one lives, one can, without knowing, prepare for it; in everything real one is closer to it, more its neighbor, than in the unreal half-artistic professions, which, while they pretend to be close to art, in practice deny and attack the existence of all art—as, for example, all of journalism does and almost all criticism and three quarters of what is called (and wants to be called) literature. I am glad, in a word, that you have overcome the danger of landing in one of those professions, and are solitary and courageous, somewhere in a rugged reality. May the coming year support and strengthen you in that.

Always Yours,
R. M. Rilke

* * * * *



Raymond Soulard, Jr.



Many Musics

Ninth Series

"Open hands, touch, & teach others how"

v. Guerilla

It came upon me with no name &
it is beautiful & I can't describe it
but I'll try. There were streets then,
closer to the water, the salt & water,
& the glare of trollies, & the fire. I was mad,
several times over, I walked & walked.

It came upon me with a beautiful push
to say, to sing, & I can only think of hands,
so many hands, come & gone, watched
& come & gone. Parks full of scrawny green,
the moon hardly a thumb's print above.
I walk & I walk. Your ass remains poised

before me, your eyes so dark, so fuzzy with want
& challenge. Like a good fuck can clear
away your heart's trash. The trollies pass
in pairs by the open window, one hither,
the other yon, I laugh. I should have laughed.
The beautiful thing, nameless, nods with me.

Calmer now, unsated, we sit together
under your room's single window.
Its view to bricks imprinted red & gold,
it comes upon us both now, sitting
together, our hands twined, coming,
going, I notice your ankles are discolored.

"My shoes," you explain. The beautiful thing
is nudging me again, pulling now.
Have to hurry. I kiss your bare shoulder &
stand finally. Your look is plain,
the timeless one when love leaves too soon
& no counter. I turn. Walk & walk.

Till the years pass, greener parks,
other hands. I can't describe it all
but I'll try. You dream you're with a friend,
another one lost one way or another,
& sitting together, there is relief. Time
didn't take you, I never let you go,
this beautiful thing pounds with every beat
in my chest, a music that never quits.

vi. Burning Man

The flutter to go came years ago,
 came upon me here, this table,
 this courtyard, a night kissed soft
 with lights & air as these, it came,
 in a flutter, rightly music? So I chose,
 & chose to go, chose to follow.

Dreaming, dreaming, perhaps, & I still wonder
 at it, how I let a flutter make a world,
 I loved the four trees in this courtyard,
 the old bricked floor, the clack & laughter
 of chess pieces nearby, we might all have
 grown old together, I have might have written

here every year from then to now. But I didn't.
 Not here. A preacher, one night, there
 on the street, crying, "Your world's mud's
 becoming dust! Behold it everywhere!
 Your world's mud is becoming dust!" I stood.
 The clatter of lights in the cafe, its later hours,

its mediocre foods. The flutter to go &
 I stood up. I was from other years.

There were too many ancient buildings
 as I walked, too much tribute to old gods
 & aged learning. The park I found was young
 with green, I tried to stay, tried to kneel
 & believe. On a bench, a scrap of cardboard
 I pocketed, flutter, flutter, go.



Those around me didn't know theirs
 was half some world becoming half
 some other, they were figures in an equation,
 waving spectres in a long long wind, I could not
 warn them, could not long lie among them,
 their views translucent when young &

muddier & muddier. I walked on, came finally
 to a tall fire in the desert where all
 could go. They danced around it, cried &
 cheered. What a beautiful thing, to flutter,
 flutter, & finally go! The years had eaten
 my hands, my art, I thought I had nothing left

yet I did not burn. I could not burn.
 A man of dreams does not burn.

I hold my uncharred scrap of cardboard tonight.
 The courtyard trees above me burst with
 springtime green, another softly kissed night.
 The mediocre foods, the knock of chessboards.
 What comes, & will not go. Where I must return.
 What beauties the night will not cede.

vii. A Man of Dreams

A man of dreams does not burn.
Am I a man of dreams? Seems so.
Many dreams? Seems so.

I still wake. I still walk by day's light.
My lover nestles me in the crimson shades
of our chamber. Our bed alights with moans & cries.

But dreaming, I sit here in this familiar
courtyard & feel it close, as the worn bricks
under my feet, the green green leaves above.

Not all is one or the other, my cane
is both, oaken, carved instructions
I cannot read when awake, called a *hekk*.

My coat, this long leather thing, another
that had crossed the Dreaming &
keeps me close. A singing in my ears.

I am trying to know this. Nobody can
tell. The summer wind, the blue glare
of gaseous street lamps. Taxis & cruisers
on the street. What is waking?
What is dreaming? Do I come here from
elsewhere & what is that place?

A woman's sweet ass in denim reminds
me of another. The chess players
nearby chat of multiple realities
between moves. I *feel the lust*,
live & remembered both. Their ideas
seem reasonable, a guitar starts up.

The music is a signal, a nudge,
a something, catch a hold its thread,
follow as a clue. Remember some things.
It's what I struggle to do. I do not burn.
I close my eyes, over the fence of details
& into the music. Cool darkness,
flowing, floating, water the temperature
of skin. A bare shoulder in a cluster
of glares, a reedy voice. To find her again,
to remember some things. The Dreaming
nudges me back from its far edges &
I wake. A bare shoulder. *Nothing burns*.

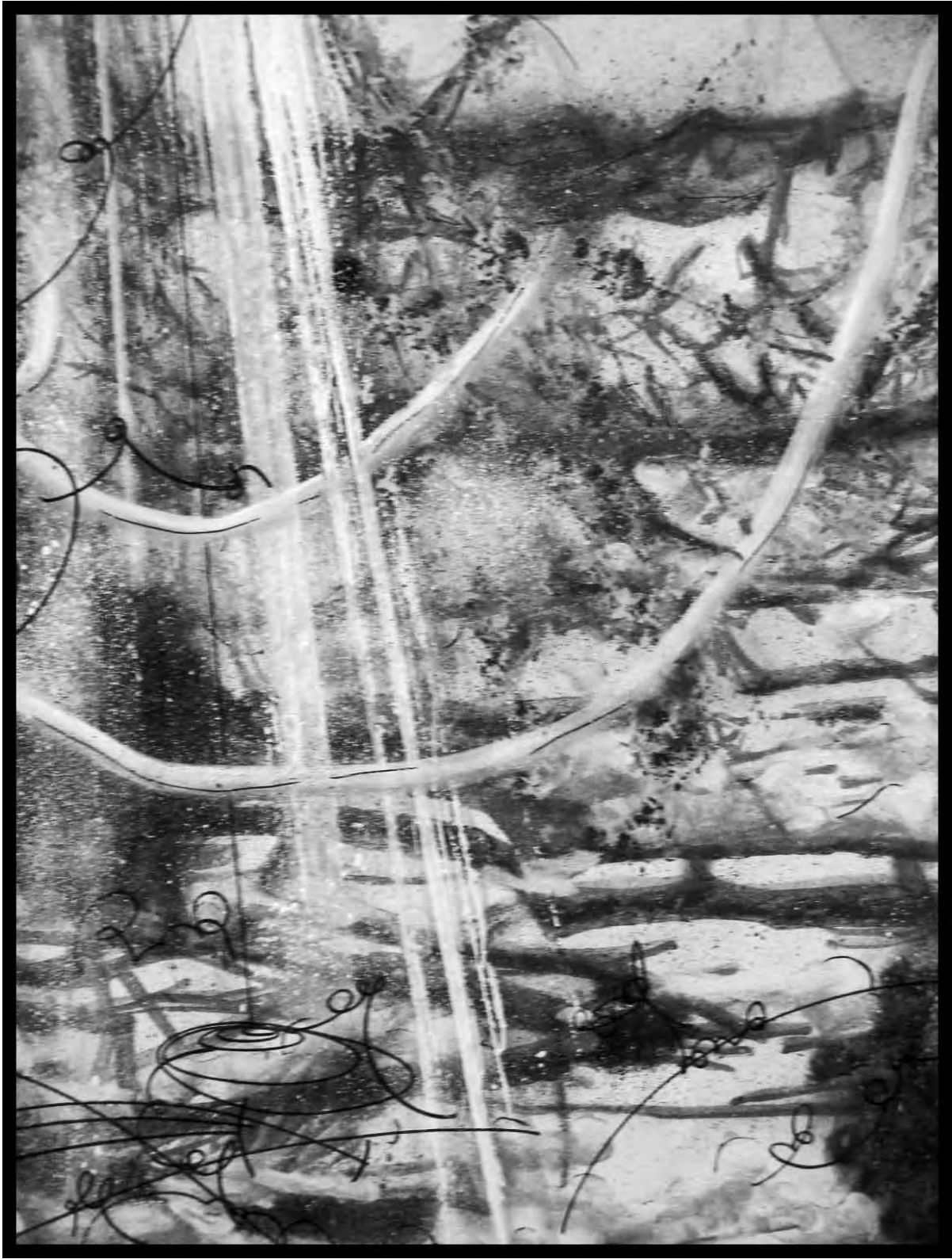
viii. A Chair is Like a Stump

There was a situation. They dress me
& send me into the night, kind,
dear, I'd struggled. They listened close.
Fed me pieces of fruit, & much water,
walked me in the garden many times
where the striped white tiger with
electric blue eyes roams. But now
I am dressed & sent into the night,
to a club, to continue my healing, &
travel on. It's the next stage.

The club is dark & the music growls
from a fractured stage. I count
ten lights upon it & nothing clearly
in view. It's wrong, maybe others
notice too. I stand & look at the girl
sitting with me, her red hair, electric
blue eyes, dressed in feathers & leaves,
more vines & stones a crown on her head,
she smiles toward something & points.
She says, "It's a language of metaphors
& displacement." I nod.

I reply, eyeing her shoulder soft in lights,
her cheek softer in shadows,
“a person is a house of rooms. And we
go from one room to the next,
clearing the cobwebs, but then
the rooms we’re not in fill up with
more & more & we keep moving.”
I am shaking, this matters.
I grasp her shoulder, grip it,
pull her to me. “*A chair is like a stump.*”

We go. We will travel together.
You will show me. You are not her
but you will show me. At night
you are warm water, floating in
darkness. Music tugging me &
I follow. Your touch is moonlight
in deep woods, a push, a pull, a tremble
to press me on in these obscure matters.



ix. Take Back Your Mind

It was a far Western city. Winter blooms
 outside the window that morning. Now night.
 That morning I'd read the sad letter &
 it'd sent me along my day's path. The longer
 I stayed in Dreamland, the more it became
 something else. The rest of it. What explained
 our encasement in time & space, on earth,
 breathing, beating. Slaves to genetic
 programming. To let go all was to fall, to fail,
 to die. So we rigged choice behind eyelids,
 behind bars of sleep, there to blow, to exhaust.

But it was a sad letter, there is that
 too. And the blooms come before spring.
 And I left you sleeping, covered you to
 chill & light. The letter warned you
 of me, wondered at all your years
 tending my music. It was a letter
 letting you go, knowing you wouldn't,
 knowing you believed, you loved,
 you waited & knew. Your face peaceful,
 your ever-light sleep mercifully unbroken.

I walked far to find my friends in
 their paintless old church, its many rooms
 a refuge. Looking further, I found them
 in the cemetery with its clusters
 of embedded stone markers. Their crowd
 of the poor, the half bidden, a few ex-priests,
 none of it mattered, I walked on, she
 wasn't in this city, the rain was icy.

As I returned to you by dusk,
all was ice, impossibly iced,
our street now a long climb, my doing
maybe. I find a phone in my hand
to call you, its cord runs to a set of
dark boulders outside our door.

I call & call. The horizon now careens
with wild sheets of light, ripping &
mending, ripping & mending, this is how
worlds end here, nothing learned
but that losing solid ground below
us, flying past days & miles,
would relieve us of nothing dearest,
the touch as it passes, the breath expires,
& to choose again, & *to choose again*.

x. There Were Birds

There were birds, there were birds, there were birds,
 & at first they were out my window &
 they were filling my dreams so they were
 out my window but filling my dreams too.
 They crossed over, with their singing,
 their chuckling, crossed over until eventually
 they formed my dreams, bigger & bigger,
 their singing became my dreams, my dreams
 became their singing, more & more,
 & still they were out my window singing.

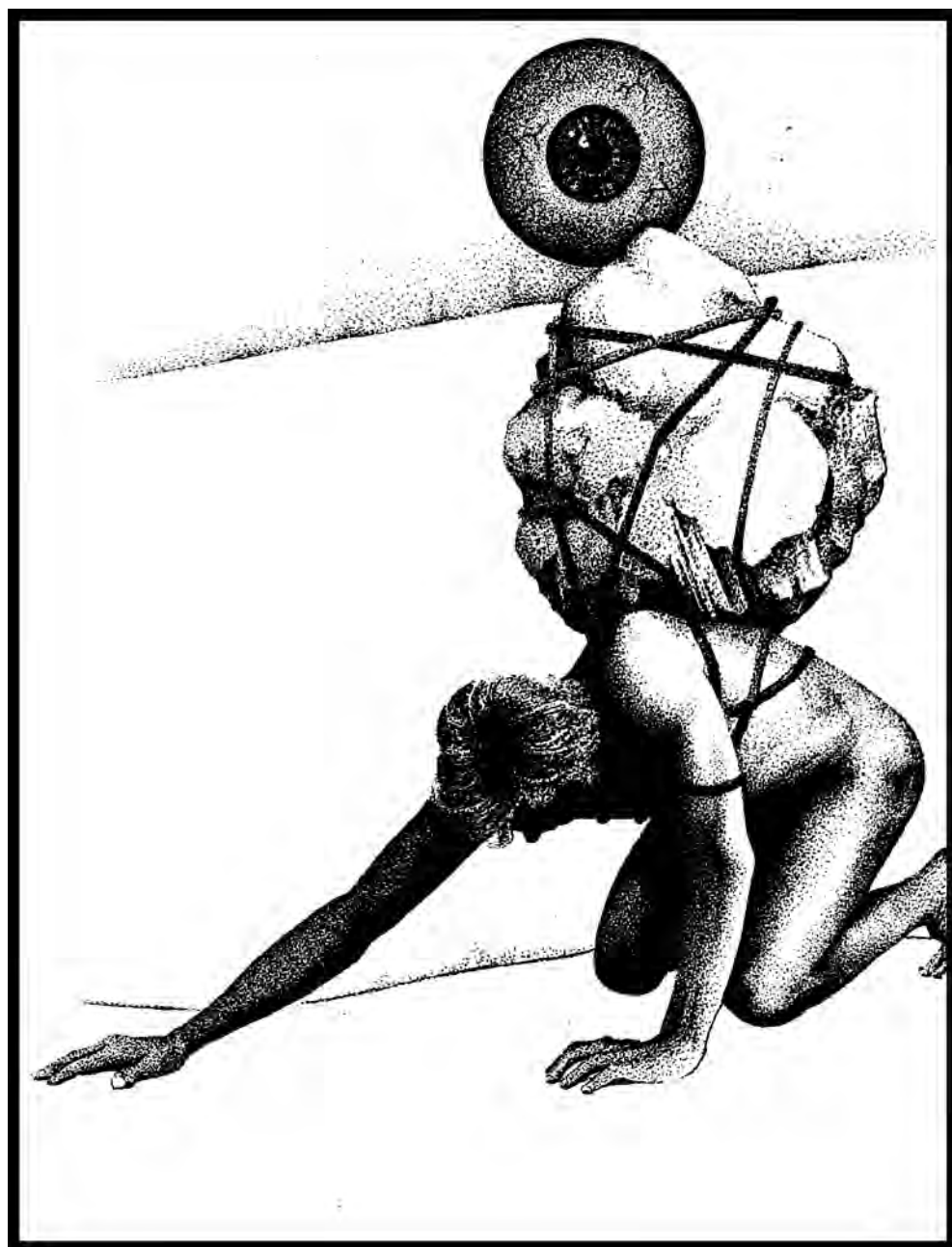
You remained. You slept more & more.
 You slept deeper into your covers, your pillow.
 You were no longer there by sun, by day.
 You were leaving with the birds, leaving
 with the birds, leaving with the birds.
 You were now neither by sun nor moon
 but you were some strange remain.
 Close to me still, a shadowy sticky something
 now, the first sweetness life will take
 & leave only open hands to remind.

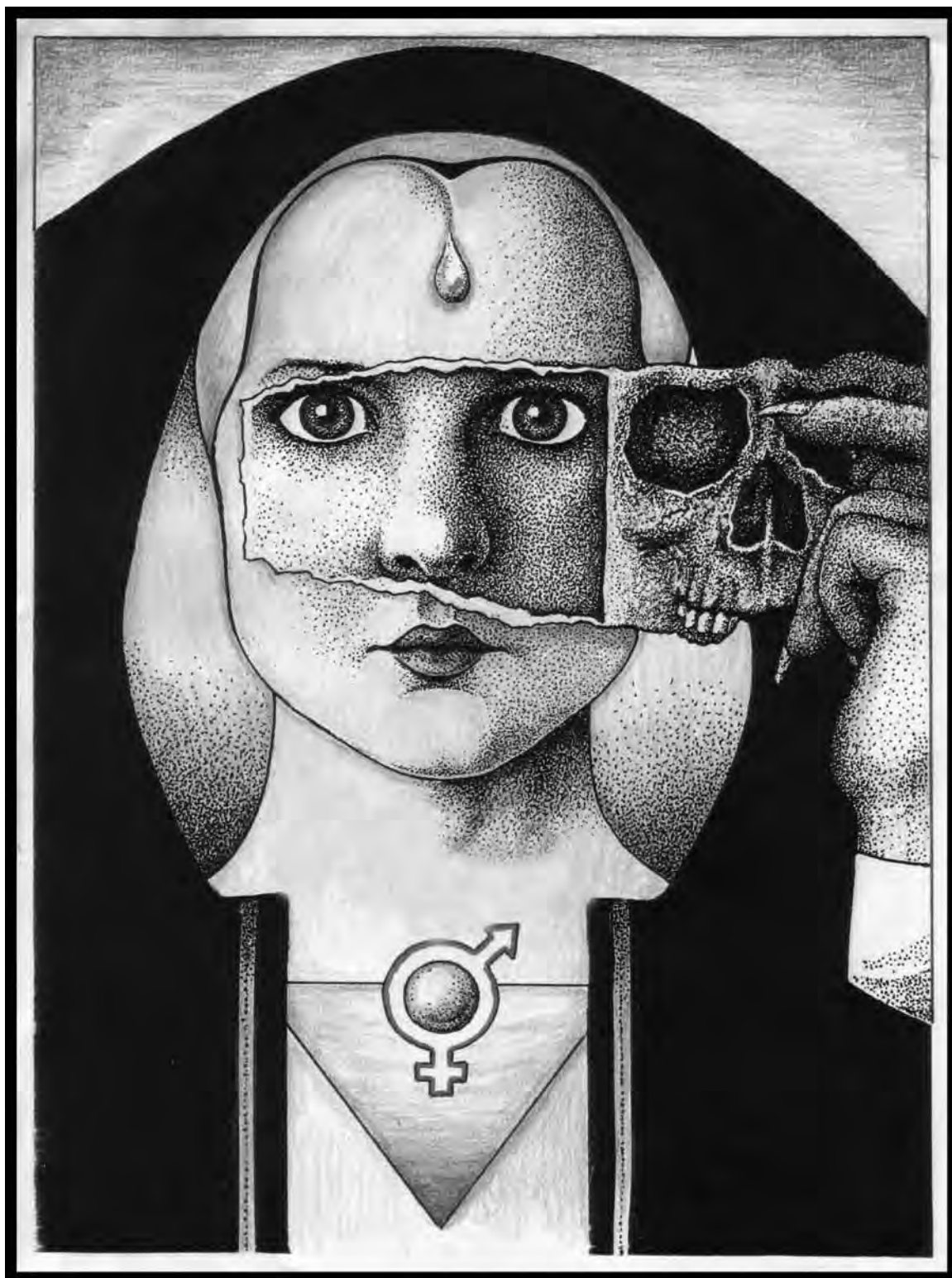


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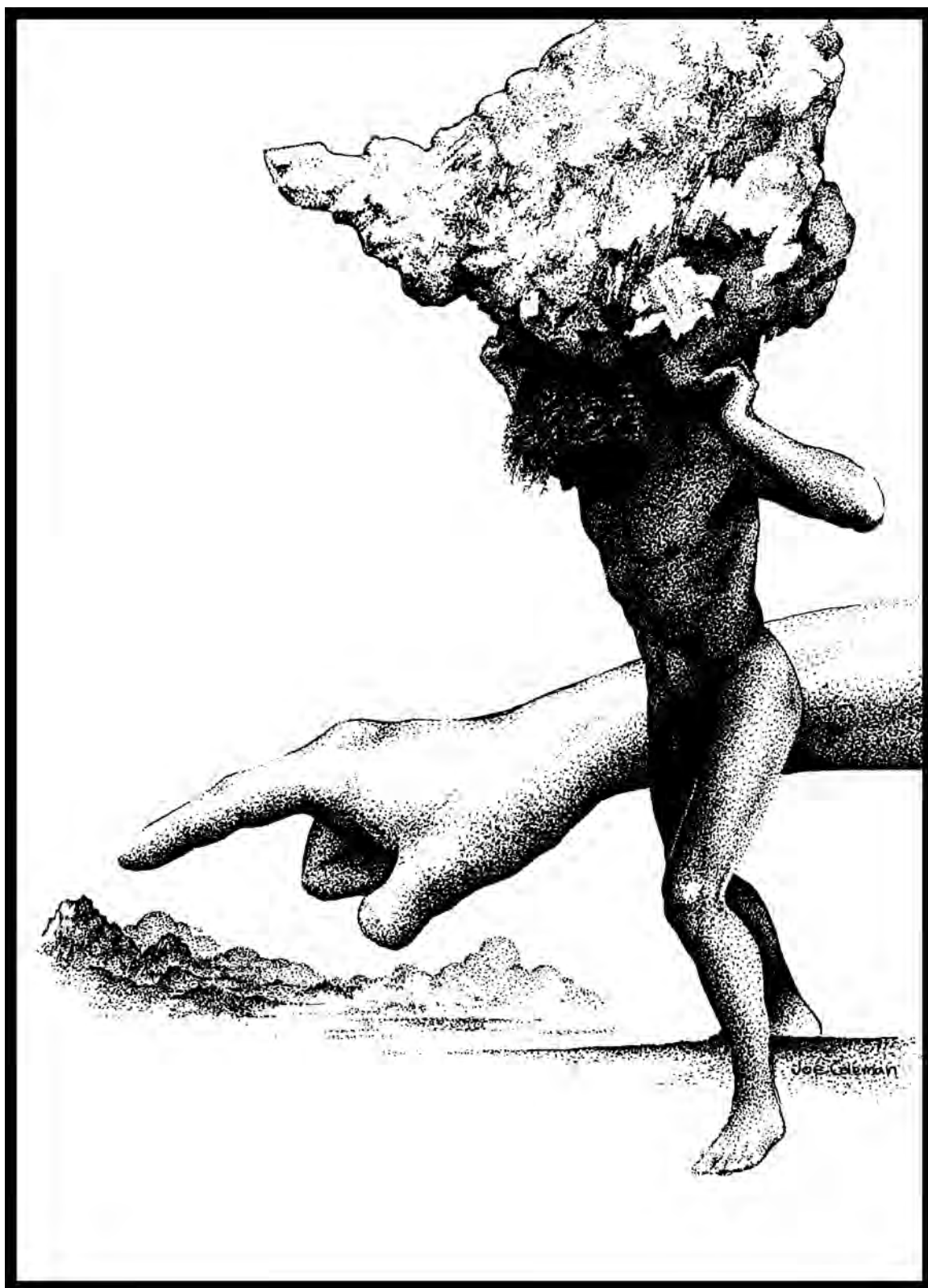


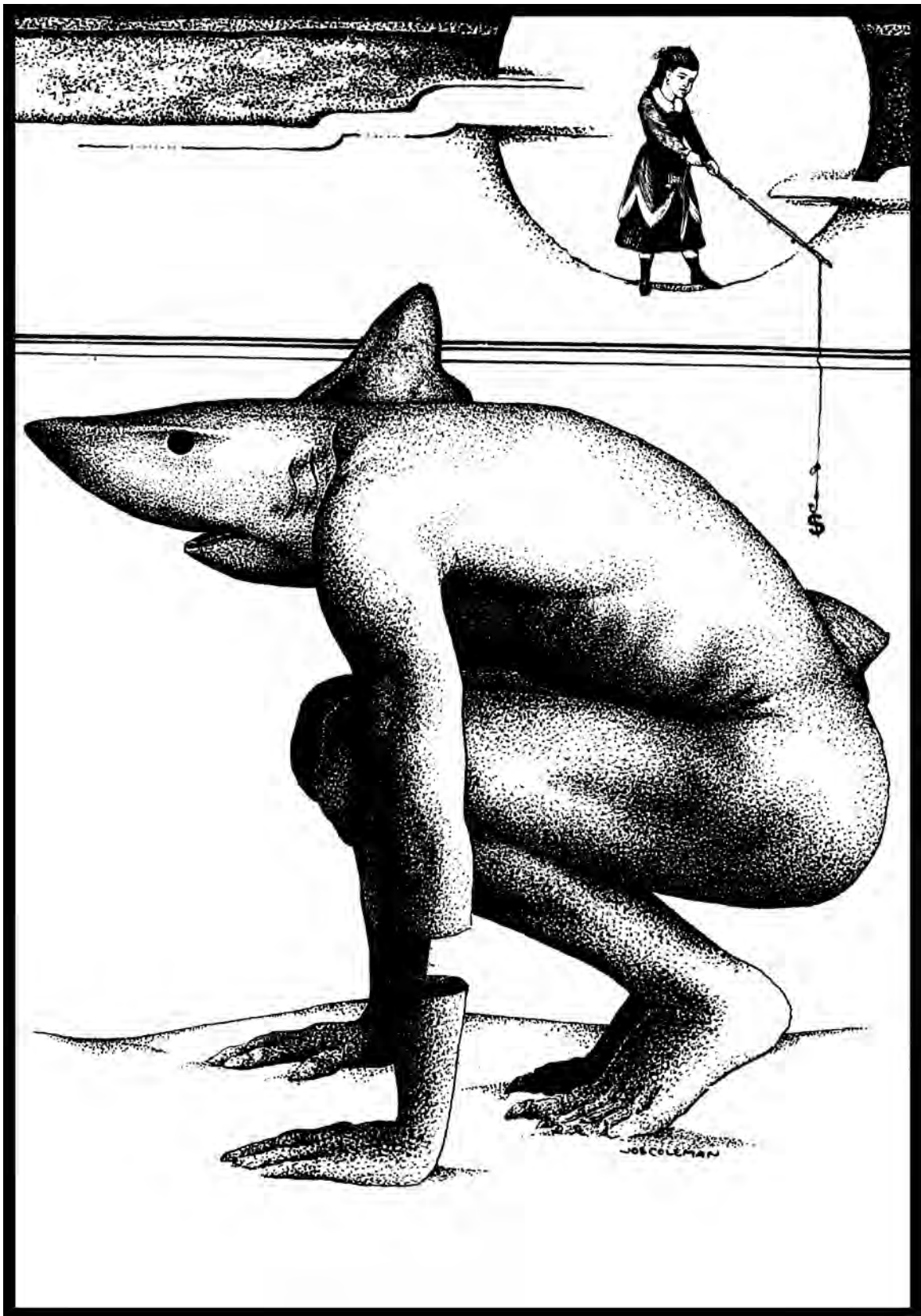
Joe Coleman













The State of Psychedelic Research:

Interview with Rick Doblin

Published December 6, 2012 at realitysandwich.com

In August 2012, I met Rick Doblin, founder of the Multidisciplinary Association of Psychedelic Studies (MAPS—maps.org), at his home near Boston to interview him for my research on the role of set and setting in the psychedelic debate of the 1960s. We set out on a long walk in the park, and Doblin explained to me the current state of psychedelic research.

Recently, I met Doblin at the Psychedemia conference which took place at the University of Pennsylvania in September 2012, and had the chance to discuss the topic with him again. This interview is based on both of those conversations.

“You know, it was actually the Holocaust that was my main motivation for doing what I do,” Doblin told me late one night as we sat together after a long day of lectures at Psychedemia.

“The Holocaust brought you to psychedelic research? How?”

“It was my recognition that this catastrophic abuse of power and violence was made possible by ignorance, fear, scapegoating, and people projecting their shadow onto others. Psychedelic psychotherapy, and the mystical sense of unity that psychedelics can generate can be an antidote to all of those things.”

Having a strong metaphysical foundation for your work is probably necessary when that work entails challenging the current status of the law, government agencies, and well-entrenched fears. However, things are not always so serious with Doblin. Sporting a perpetually cheerful smile, and always enthusiastic about discussing the burning issues of psychedelic research, Doblin—who earned his PhD in public policy from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University—is the perfect poster child for psychedelic research.

He has played a central role in advancing the cause of psychedelic research since 1986, when he founded MAPS, an organization which today is the central connecting and facilitating platform for psychedelic research around the world. Over the past decade, MAPS has been leading the research on MDMA, treating Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in war veterans. It has also sponsored research on the use of LSD and MDMA for treating terminal patients with end-of-life anxiety, and the use of ibogaine and ayahuasca for the treatment of opiate addictions.

“Psychedelic researchers are focusing on two main fields, toward making psychedelics available through prescription” says Doblin. “Heffter Research Institute is leading the effort on psilocybin, focusing its research on the use of psilocybin for end-of-life anxiety, while at MAPS we focus on the use of MDMA for the treatment of PTSD.”

More Than a Life's Work

“Seven to ten years” is what Doblin says it will take until MDMA is approved by the FDA as a treatment for PTSD, if all goes well. After it is approved, doctors will also be able to prescribe it off-label for other conditions, which could lead to its recognition as an effective treatment for other psychological afflictions.

Seven years might sound like a long time, but the fact that Doblin is even in a position to speculate speaks volumes about the progress psychedelic research has made since he founded MAPS in 1986, just one year after MDMA was made a schedule I drug. Doblin's role in bringing psychedelic research back into the lab might be contrasted with that of Dr. Timothy Leary, who was responsible, in the eyes of some, for the psychedelics ban in the first place.

Doblin has dedicated two impressive academic papers to examining Leary's work and has uncovered some thought-provoking flaws in that early research. It seems he has dedicated his life to fixing the damage done to psychedelic research in the 1960s. While Leary's work was sometimes criticized by opponents for lacking a rigorous methodology, exaggerating benefits, and underestimating the safety risks, Doblin has put the emphasis on a cautious, careful, and rigorous approach. Most importantly, Doblin seeks to bring change from within the establishment, rather than rejecting or antagonizing it.

“Today, we are more aware that there are complex issues that have to be looked at,” he says. “This has to be done more cautiously, because we're speaking to a freaked-out culture that had a bad trip with psychedelics. We're trying to talk them through it, and work through these things. There is a growing sense of opportunity for psychedelic research. It's still fragile, but it's not that fragile. It's international, and it has to be done in a really transparent, open way. People are fascinated by this stuff and they should be. It's all about love, connection, feelings, and spirituality.”

Our discussion continued.

INTERVIEWER:

You've been involved in psychedelic research for three decades, starting when there was a strict moratorium, and eventually arranging FDA-approved Phase 2 trials. You are now working to start Phase 3 trials, which will take even more time, money, and tackling of bureaucracy. It's a long and complicated process. Do you see it as your life's work?

DOBLIN: It's more than a life's work. Ten years ago, I was worried that my interest in psychedelics would be perceived by young people as this idealistic, naïve idea of the hippies that had been discredited by the conservative drift and the failure of the sixties. I worried that if it didn't all get done by my generation, it might never get done, because other generations might not value it, and that we were isolated, self-deluded hippies. What I've found is that there are more than enough people in the younger generations who are interested in psychedelics. Most of my staff is in their 20s, and they are really connected to the spirit of what we're trying to do. I feel I can try to optimize the timing of initiatives, in terms of when we get our data out, when we have the latest media announcements, and so on.

INTERVIEWER:

A lot of people in the psychedelic community have criticized the use of a medical model in the past. It is often noted that most people don't want to spend a psychedelic experience together with doctors in a medical setting, and that the medical model doesn't address the full potential of psychedelics. What do you say to that as somebody who stands at the forefront of medical psychedelic research?

DOBLIN: That it is totally right. We don't want a medical priesthood or a religious priesthood, because there are different kinds of benefits. There are physical benefits, marital counseling benefits, spirituality benefits, creativity benefits, and recreational, celebratory benefits. My background is psychology, governance, and public policy. I am trying to pick a strategy that will lead to the widespread availability of the legal use of psychedelics. I think it will come through psychedelic prescription medication. In a way, we already have legal medical use with ketamine, which is a prescription medicine for anesthesiologists, and can be prescribed off-label.

The idea of using psychedelics as a medicine is likely to be most in line with what has already happened in the mainstream. The spiritual use of psychedelics is currently limited to small religious groups, but it plays an important role in changing cultural attitudes, especially the use of ayahuasca. But expanding to personal freedom, beyond religious groups, to the use of psychedelics for individual spirituality, creativity, and personal growth, is too close to wholesale legalization to lead the way.

A Psychedelic Renaissance

For an outside observer, the return of psychedelic studies would probably have seemed highly improbable 25 years ago. Psychedelic studies were put on a moratorium at the end of the 1960s, and seemed to be a thing of the past that would never be allowed to happen again. However, since 1990, the volume of academic research papers on psychedelics has been rising steadily. In the past decade, this growing flow has turned into an impressive corpus of studies about psychedelics coming from labs, as well as from an increasingly wide variety of academic disciplines, and giving rise to talk of a psychedelic renaissance.

"FDA is willing to do science over politics. That's the key thing," says Doblin. "They're willing to have a rational scientific debate."

INTERVIEWER:

What caused this change of attitude?

DOBLIN: The change at the FDA was not due to the debate over psychedelics. It happened as the result of the pharmaceutical industry and Congress influencing the FDA to speed up the drug development review process. In 1989, this led to the creation of the Pilot Drug Evaluation Staff, a new group at FDA with the responsibility of reviewing research with psychedelics and marijuana, along with medications for pain, headaches, and other indications. They wanted to show that they had processes that would expedite drug development. They wanted psychedelic and medical marijuana research to proceed so they could demonstrate these new processes. In 1992, the FDA advisory committee recommended that human studies be resumed and regulated by the FDA the way they regulate any major pharmaceutical company. The FDA got



NIDA, the DEA, and the drug czar to agree to that by making it seem as if those little non-profit psychedelic people would never get past the FDA drug development system. According to the pharmaceutical industry, it costs more than a billion dollars to get a drug out into the market. However, it won't actually cost MAPS a billion dollars—more like \$15-\$20 million.

INTERVIEWER:

Why? Where was the flaw in their line of argument?

DOBLIN: These numbers come from the Tufts Center for the Study of Drug Development. The different pharmaceutical companies send financial information about their research efforts to this central place under conditions of confidentiality.

Pharmaceutical companies are for-profit entities. There is a concept called opportunity cost, which is the measure an activity's cost in terms of the next best alternative. Theoretically, they could be using the money they invest in research for no return to invest in the stock market or in bonds. Even in this investment climate, they were calculating that they could be earning 12% a year on what they're spending for research. When you take into account compounding interest, and that these research processes sometimes take 15-20 years, half of that billion dollars is this opportunity cost. We don't have that because, as a non-profit, we don't consider money spent on research as a lost investment opportunity.

The other factor is that these companies have only had a few successes. In fact, they have a lot of failures. The cost of all of their research effort is amortized over these few successes. If they spent half a billion dollars but only got two successes, then each one cost 250 million. We know psychedelics work, we just have to prove it. We don't need to study thousands of different new molecules to come up with a drug that works.

They come up with something that's patentable so that they can control it, and they have to spend a lot of money proving safety. We have the advantage of MDMA being ecstasy, and governments all over the world have already spent over \$300 million dollars on trying to show why it's bad. Millions of people have taken it, so we know all the side effects. The FDA knows more about MDMA than any other drug they have ever approved. This is also true about LSD, psilocybin, the other classic psychedelics, and marijuana.

When you subtract all these costs to pharmaceutical companies that we don't have to spend, you start trying to calculate what it will cost to conduct the research needed to prove safety and efficacy in your specific patient population. One factor of cost is that the larger the treatment effect and the less variability in the results, the less subjects you'll need. My guess is it will cost about \$15 million dollars. The costs are reasonable, particularly since the research expenditures are spent over 8 years or so. Funds don't have to be raised all at once.

INTERVIEWER:

Where do you get your funding from?

DOBLIN: Donations from individuals and family foundations have been the only source. There have been no government grants yet since the government is still in middle of supporting the War on Drugs. There are also no pharmaceutical grants since psychedelics are off-patent, can't be monopolized, and compete with other psychiatric medications that people take daily. But overall, controversy has lessened, and the need for new treatments for PTSD, end-of-life

anxiety, and addiction has increased. Baby boomers are a large source of support. Some of them are returning to psychedelics again after years of absence while they focused on careers and family. Time is on our side. There is a group of boomers who have been financially successful that are now rediscovering spirituality as they get older. These people are helping financially, and also culturally. These are people with good reputation that you'd be surprised had good experiences with psychedelics.

I think our chances for private funding are quite reasonable. While the next level is more expensive each time we get more data, more people are willing to get involved. I have been talking with a foundation in England that is considering whether it is a reputational risk or a reputational opportunity for them to support MDMA/PTSD research. Unfortunately, they see it as a reputational risk. This foundation is the largest in England. It has \$20 billion dollars in assets and gives away about a billion dollars per year. They are still not ready to get involved, so we have to keep trying with them for another couple of years. We have to get to the end of Phase 2, which will cost about \$3 million, and then have Phase 3, which will be about \$10-15 million.

INTERVIEWER:

When process is completed, what kind of model do you see for psychedelic therapy in the future?

DOBLIN: The treatment form depends on the condition you're treating. In general, it will be non-directive, client-focused, following the emotional threads brought up by patients. There will be positive, corrective experiences, as well as working through trauma, particularly end-of-life therapy, and PTSD. Outside of treating diagnosed psychiatric indications, it can also be used for couples therapy, spiritual growth and, eventually, rites of passage at all ages. It could be used to make bar mitzvahs more meaningful, to help young people decide what they want to do with their lives, and other things throughout the lifespan. When I turned fifty, I felt that I needed a big dose of LSD-assisted psychotherapy just to adjust to getting older.

INTERVIEWER:

Can all of this really fit that within the scope of therapy?

DOBLIN: No, because it goes beyond curing clinically diagnosable mental illness. These are existential issues of being alive, not pathologies. That's one reason why we're not looking into couples therapy. MDMA could be great for couples therapy, but that's not a disease. To make it into a medicine for couples therapy, you have to make it into a medicine for a disease first. Then doctors can prescribe it off-label for couples therapy and other conditions. Once you get it approved for one thing, physicians have the freedom to prescribe it for other purposes. I think it's initially going to be approved for use only in psychedelic clinics. The therapists will be regulated and the set and setting will be regulated.

INTERVIEWER

So the set and setting will actually be part of the regulation process? It is actually part of what we look at when we look at the results of research, right?

DOBLIN: Yes. Setting is what the FDA has been regulating in our research studies. They will

be talking with us about what we recommend for the setting. Initially, the setting will most likely be similar to the one in which the research was conducted. We showed that it is effective in a particular setting. We didn't show that they took the drug at home, went to the beach, had a great time, and now their PTSD is better. It's likely that there will be a certain kind of training that psychiatrists and therapists will have to receive. There will be rules for the setting and physical location. Such rules could include there having to be a bathroom that you can get to from your room to avoid walking through a public space, having to spend the night there, monitoring and co-therapists teams to make sure there is no abuse or unethical treatment, and safety equipment in case of emergencies.

INTERVIEWER:

Are there any major opponents for psychedelic research at this point? Is there anybody that is really trying to stop this thing?

DOBLIN: Because of supposed toxicity and memory problems, there are some academics funded by the NIDA who will say that MDMA is too dangerous to be used even once in therapy. In April 2011, at Breaking Convention, a big psychedelic conference in England, there was a panel that was focused on MDMA research. The panel discussion featured a fellow by the name of Andy Parrot, who is the leading opponent of MDMA research in the scientific community. As you can see on the video of the debate on the MAPS website, he's got a lonely position that's difficult to defend scientifically. It seems he does that for the publicity and attention. There are not a lot of people left in the scientific community who say that it's too dangerous to be used therapeutically. However, there are still a few, and Andy Parrot is one of them.

After 15 years of trying to get the military interested in MDMA/PTSD research, there was a meeting two years ago with senior Veterans Administration (VA) people and senior psychiatrists at a major research university. Unfortunately, the VA people said it was too politically complex for them to get involved at this time, but that it is important research and somebody should be doing that. Presently, we're trying again to see if things have shifted over time.

Sometimes, the opponents are parents groups that think that the best way to protect their kids is to tell them scare stories and block research into benefits. Supposedly, there are drugs that are all bad, with only risks and no benefits. This sort of dishonest drug education doesn't really work. The pharmaceutical companies are not opponents because they don't see us as a threat. The DEA is not very thrilled about it, but we've outmaneuvered them. The military has got more power than the DEA. The veterans have more power than the DEA, and they want to see this research take place.

A Psychedelic Driver's License

The topic of drug legalization has been a locus for hot debate in American society over the years, and one which many psychedelic research advocates seek to separate from the issue of scientific research. When asked about the relation between psychedelic research and psychedelic legalization, Doblin says that's one of the hardest questions.

"It all comes back to the methodology," he says. "Even from a scientific point of view, it is better for people to disclose their biases. Otherwise, you have a conflict of interest. If you

think that prohibition is this vast injustice that inhibits research, then I believe it's best to admit that. This is not the least controversial path in the short run. However, our strategy is for the long run."

Still, Doblin argues, we don't really want all drugs to be available to everybody all the time. Same as with alcohol, regulation will be needed, but a smarter one. Doblin is a proponent of the "drug driver's license" concept, which was also championed by Leary back in the 1960s. It follows the notion that, like guns and cars, drugs are tools that can be used or abused. In the same way that a person needs to get a license to drive a car or own a gun to insure his safety and the safety of others, that person will have to go through a certain kind of training to get a license to use a certain drug. More knowledgeable drug users, who were taught to use drugs in a safer, more intelligent way, should lead to decreased drug casualties. Also, Doblin argues, since violating the terms of a drug license would lead to its retrieval, users will have more to lose and be more careful not to abuse drugs. "It won't make the black market disappear, but it will make it smaller, which will make it more difficult to obtain drugs illegally. It might make people think twice before they do things which will put their license at risk," he says.

Until the psychedelic driver's license meme becomes dominant, MAPS is doing other work to minimize drug harm. The organization has been involved with different educational activities like the "Psychedelic Crisis" video, which teaches YouTube viewers how to help a person having a bad trip. Another one of these activities has been setting up psychedelic emergency clinics in festivals. "We have been doing this psychedelic emergency service at Boom Festival and at other large festivals where people do a lot of drugs," says Doblin. "We will have therapists and volunteers to help people who need it. The Boom Festival, for example, has spent 30,000 euros to provide this psychedelic emergency service. They funded teams that were there 24 hours a day. This work envisions how things might work in a post-prohibition world, because people are going to be using these things recreationally."

INTERVIEWER:

How many emergencies do you have in such a festival, and how do you handle them?

DOBLIN: Sometimes over a hundred. The treatment takes place in a large geodesic dome that separated into different spaces by white sheets. What we mostly say is, "you didn't intend this to happen, but you can see this as an opportunity." It's more of a therapeutic approach, like short-term, acute psychotherapy. This turns into a kind of training program for therapists. We don't have to worry about getting arrested for providing this sort of support because in Portugal, drugs are decriminalized. This allows measures that increase drug use safety to exist. At Boom, they provide thin layer chromatography drug testing. People can bring in drugs they bought and have them tested for authenticity. They tell you for free if it's fake or if it's pure. That brings you back to the question of legalization. Widespread use by young people in the 1960s is what panicked people, and led to the criminalization of research. Now that we got some of the research back, non-medical use is still illegal. If people get scared of the illegal use, they could shut down the research. By focusing on harm reduction, we help prevent that from happening.

INTERVIEWER:

That depends on the public discourse about drugs and psychedelics. Do you see a sign for change in the way these things are perceived in the general society and culture?

DOBLIN: The term *psychedelic* is becoming rehabilitated. More and more people are hearing the word *psychedelic* being said by doctors wearing suits and ties. The two hardest symbolic obstacles we had to overcome to show the arrival of the psychedelic renaissance were starting LSD research, since LSD is the symbol of the 1960s, and starting research at Harvard, which is where Leary was. Once those research goals were accomplished, people were like, “Shit! They’re doing this at Harvard!” Recently, we had an article in military.com about our initial success in our first MDMA/PTSD study. It was republished in the Navy Seals website, and reported by the Partnership for a Drug Free America, without saying that this was a terrible thing. That tells you something. Our work with war veterans has really moved us forward. When you look at the big picture of psychedelics and psychedelic research today, I think things are going pretty well.

* * * * *





Joe Ciccone


North Jersey Afternoon

In the grand rooms of my childhood home
 The old Italian men moved deliberately in 1979.
 I was happily at play in the spot-lit sun,
 In a patch of blazing yellow on a yellow carpet.

In a tangle of tin trains I spied their casual suits,
 Their cigars burning a scent of home, which rose
 Like the smoke of my locomotives, barreling
 Across imagined trestles in those days of imagination.

The talk was light as the Yankees were fair,
 Homesick Munson had crashed his plane,
 Someone had tickets from a business relation.
 And so they held court for hours in that sun-filled room.

As the sun-tracked shadows lengthened
 On those warm floors of home, and the Demitasse cups
 Clinked gently on their porcelain saucers,
 The conversation quieted, grew more urgent in tone.

Those stout voices turned, each one, toward a center point
 Somewhere above their grapes and walnuts—
 Consensus was reached. It would be done.
 The old Italian men were deliberate, in 1979.

* * * * *



Martina Newberry

After the Hurricane

Silence except for breezes shuffling across wounded land
 The roads all point to augured and remember
 The tops of hills washed in gray-pink light, courtesy of an unwilling setting sun
 White gravel like baby teeth, scattered across the lawns and parks and driveways
 What is left? Who knows?
 Signs point to:

No Jesus	No sex toys
No roses	No rivers
No mugs of coffee	No Bodhisattvas
No motors	No beads
No dollars	No magic
No wheat fields	No drugs
No booze	No candy

He smiles at the space where a ceiling used to be
 “Shall we finish?” he asks the brunette in the blue nylon slip.
 “It’s all over now.”
 Her nod is like pure crack—a firecracker in his brain.

* * *

Gifts

With these words, I bring you the gift of weeping,
of stroking the tired tears from your cheeks.

I bring you my troublesome self, wild with love
and coffee and the muffled earthquake thumpings

from the apartment next door. With these words,
I bring you the ticking of darkness

falling over the rooms of your spirit
and the hollow corridors of your guilt.

My mother, wrapped in Lithium,
swore she saw the crescent moon

sweat or shed tears,
“ . . . one or the other,” she said.

* * * * *

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Labyrinthine

[a new fixtion]

Part Eight

*"When did it matter the most?
When I smiled at another & believed."*

xv.

I take a hand of each, insist. For Christina, like all I do, it's a sexual act. For Maya, despite my revealed thoughts, it is safety. But I know none of this will do enough.

"What, Kinley?"

"I can't protect you here. Either of you."

They huddle near me, not scared, but not wishing to part.

"Kinley, tell me what you can. Tell us."

We sit, now. I have to think. They crowd close. They are shielding me, giving me time.

"I was young but I had this idea. It's like one world gets made, tried out, fails, & gets abandoned for a new one. It happens over & over."

"Is it true?"

"Later I tried to trace my idea. A book, a movie? A TV show?"

"What was it?"

"I'm not sure. I wondered if I dreamt it. I'd written it down, but just a few pages in a small notebook."

"Then?"

"I don't know. I neared it again."

"Neared it?"

"Kinley—"

"It's why we're here. It's why we are with Maya."

"Is it why you & me?"

"No."

"Why's that then?"

"I love you. I always have. I didn't conceive you in a book or a dream, Christina. I saw you & the world changed. I did a lot of things wrong on the way but it's that simple."

They giggle. Both of them. They are the most potent beings I've ever known, more so together, & my raw blunt confession of love makes them blush & giggle.

"Is Dylan like that?"

"No. He's younger."

"Oh."

"Still."

"Yah."

Then before I can think to say they are both all over me, Christina sharing some, which she usually would never, Maya letting me a little, which she enjoys despite her skittishness—

"Someone tried to make you"

"Tried."

"I'm glad he didn't."

She nods, lets me, moans a little when Christina does too, eventually we all calm down again.

We're good, all of us, the little bit of tension is gone. We are bound to each other, in different ways, but strong, good. They wait for me, listen.

Kinley looks at me, straight, hard.

"Are you sure?"

"It's just an old myth"

"Nothing just in anything you do."

I nod.

"You'd commit us?"

"Yes."

"The rest too?"

"Thinking on it."

"Is this climax?"

"It's next."

He nods.

"The myth plays through here. We see what happens."

He nods.

This book has arrived at the Tangled Gate, has skirmished in & around it, now it's time to re-invent both.

I watch a blizzard through an all-night market window. A man shovels snow from a bus stop. Trucks pass. I think: 1607 pgs & 6½ yrs to get to this page, this line. 20some pgs a month. 2/3rds pg for approx 2200 days. Plus 480 poems. And other stuff. Big truck goes by. Taxi. Two shovellers now. More chatting than shoveling. Electric juice near. Soda. Hat. Polly iPod. Thoughts Pad. Yo La Tengo on Polly. *Cenacle* 83 uncorrected copy. Litter. Cars buried. Still traffic. Buses. A breath. A passage. Here goes.

[To continue but not yet begin: the Tangled Gate has always been, whatever it may be, it is before, it is because, & it is arrival. World emerges from it & arrives back in the end.]

[What does that mean? It means worlds come & they recede but the Gate is what creates them &]

lets them decay.

[Is this true? It's true enough. It's what I believe. That sounds like I'm hedging a little & I am. I'm not one to think the whole story easily told, or the blame easily & rightly laid.]

[I picked up this manuscript at this moment because it's about to launch into a whole big myth-making mess & a word needed to be said. A protest.]

[I won't name myself now but I'll say this much. Even within this story about the Gate there is dissent. Questions. A sense that it may all be true, or some. Or none. Probably some of it.]

[My beliefs tell me the Tangled Gate is all, but I've been wrong before. I'm fervent, & I'm doubtful. It's a good way to be, I recommend it. The mythology is appealing, but, it could be wrong.]

Are you done?

For now.

Do you understand this better than anyone else does?

I didn't say that.

What then?

Go tell your myths.

You object.

I believe. I dissent.

Are you done?

For now.

The stage is lighted by a very few candles, the audience is excited but behaves. The moments before a show are tense, hard to say why, it's like the moments before love-making when the air around the lovers tightens & clears, & the best, most natural thing in the world—music or love-making count as this—eases to begin, should be happening always, doesn't seem to be—

The strum of acoustic guitar, the strum of electric joins, drums barely swished, bass guitar the deep stones of the sea, & keyboards the froth of waves, the sound does get more like ocean, bang slap of water hitting wood, the electric glare of a late year's sun, the pushing back of the curtain to reveal: more ocean, more sunlight, & a small boat bobbing—

(i.)

The rocks are straight ahead of you, & you feel like you can make them, the sea is cold but you love the sea & it loves you & there is a reluctance to let go between you, & why? Why. Those rocks are home, the very edge, reach them & you land home. Don't you? Is this sea, these choppy pulling waters, home too, home instead, home in a longer ago way, deep in you as the salty blood throughout your swimming torso, which & what would be right then?

You keep swimming & eventually touch one rock & then the next, pull, struggle clumsy, more, climb, stumble, cry a little, this sea is not just what surrounds home, or a passage to elsewhere, this sea is live with you, in little many ways half felt & known.

The Island has always been here, as this world has always been here, which is to say, long but not forever. Maybe an idea of the Island in the idea of a world, coupled with an idea of always, of time.

You lay on the rocks, breathing, choking, regretting, there's too many thoughts & body resists, cries breathe, cries rest. Croons rest & all becomes easier. Body knows, nearly always knows.

With ideas of time come stories, easily, & questions like who & where & why. Questions of the mortal, the self-aware. Who am I? What do I do? What will happen next? What will happen to me?

Who am I? What do I do?

To stay here is to forget some things, somewhat. Easy step forward is a step away too. Faces, what they meant. Words. Agreements? Yes. maybe.

Think, Christina. Think! He said we should know, deserve to know. Walk the bricks of deep myth. He fucking talks like that. It turns you on about him, then after awhile less. At least he's not too—

Ah. The other one. Maya. He does but not too much, not more than you do. That's OK. She's looking for the boy, & her friends, & I suppose what she is.

Stand up, assess your goods. Nothing broken. Still hot. Ha. Blue bag. He said don't open till you have to. Not when or why. He didn't know, which bothered him. Fucking Kinley. I something you. I do.

I won't see either of you in the usual way for awhile. Bricks, deep myth, all that.

Human myth is about what it means to be human, questions, suggestions, warnings. The best of it nothing to a tree, or a white squirrel. The best of it looks around as much as deep in, & comes to no answers, maybe music. Gestures to look up, listen, sniff.

Human myth is a tool to navigate the labyrinth, a thread, or maybe just a walking stick & a torch. Even deep myth still reeks of skin & bones. A bi-pedaled skeleton. Beseech the world for better myths? Explain your question to a rock.

I wasn't sure of this. Maya wasn't either. But it was clear that the princess lived two lives, on the Island until she left, & her exile & return. So we would share her, younger & older. Kinley the architect, chasing us across years & time. Getting all the ass. I wanted him to enjoy this idea more. A little more.

He wants into the Tower. He wants maps of the Tangled Gate. He felt us getting lost in it. Interested by it too much. Enjoying it. After awhile not even moving so much. Just wrapped around each other.

Shit & fuck, I enjoyed that. Kinley's hardness, endless need, his vicious need to be

gentle, to not break, Maya's skittishness & what dragons below. What beautiful dragons.

He used his mind to recall us & even this didn't work so well. We'd come here without a plan, the Gate would consume us unknowing. It served to command, but otherwise enjoyed a perpetual dreaming.

Kinley moved us with his incredible mind onto some solid ground. Not cohered, but more so. He reached into his own mind to find stones & rocks to build with. Maya & I had less so we just clung to him, we urged into his thinking, fired it, protect us by seeking to know, fire heart, fire mind, fire heart, fire mind—

His ideas seemed to be that we had to start with the old story, learn what it really was, who they were, become them, remember them, play through them

He didn't pretend to know the answers of it, but he had been coming to this place all his life, I knew this, Maya had learned it, we had come together with him here—

The Gate let us put on these guises, led me to those waters where I had left them behind to swim to the Island, it was a long swim & I had to forget who I was to traverse the necessary water, & even now I feel this going again, it's going to be why I'm here even when I do not remember anything else.

The Castle is up there. The Dancing Ground. The Tower. The Tangled Gate. All I knew & I've returned now. The beach. There it is. The beach.

We can lose years or lives to myths, one or another, several, successively. Colorful, compelling explanations for why the stars shine & how the heart breaks. Assurances that men have always suffered, always endured. The press to continue. To live lives that mean as much. New myths. New dreams. Look back. There's how.

Can I be you & me both? Can I understand what compelled you & still act of my own loyalties & loves? Do I have to forget all that I am?

No. I decide.

"No," I say aloud. Nothing seems to listen but I know this is the Gate & all listens here.

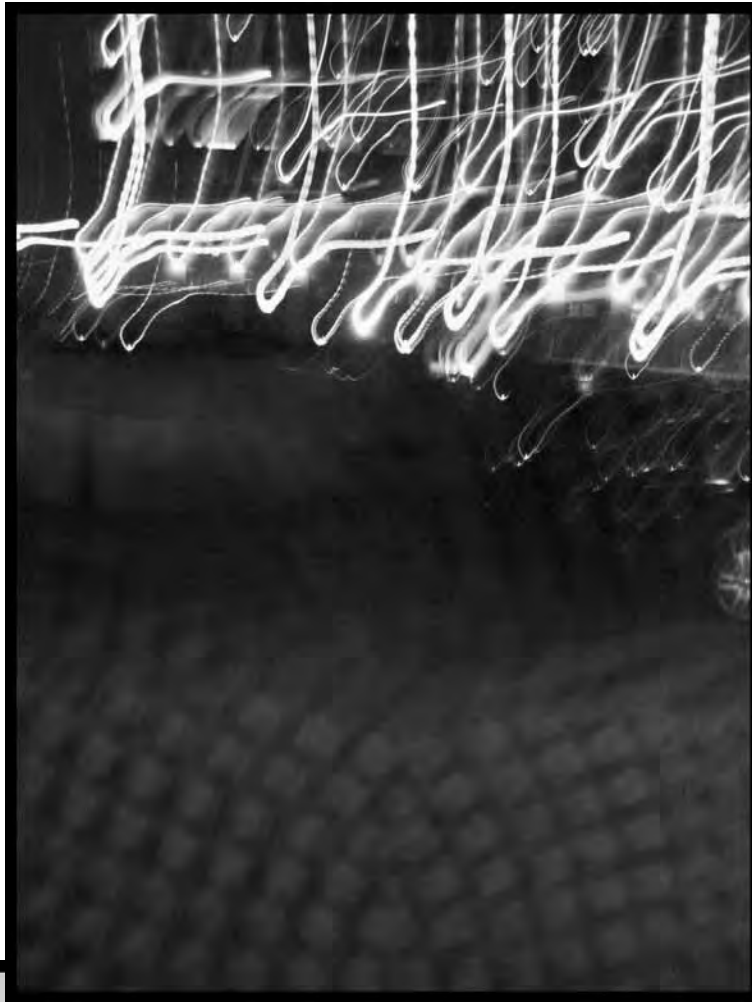
"No" I repeat, for myself, for it to stick.

I will be you. I will know you. But I will not lose myself in this.

I don't think Kinley or Maya will either.

(ii.)

She begins to recognize me more as we travel on. She calms. She . . . begins to grow younger.



I have no claim on her & less than none. I was sent to retrieve her by the one who had been her master & was no longer.

I wasn't what she had known then either. A jock among his crew, trying to fuck whoever the rest hadn't. There were fewer pretty quick. The prettiest ones first, most of them. A couple were always too scared or religious or whatever fuck.

Then the rest. The freaks. The eggheads. The ones a little top or bottom-heavy.

Your sister Ashleigh was a prize none of us could score, Jazz. She didn't know what she wanted. Carelessly sucked a few cocks & got a reputation. Let it be. She was like that. I found myself liking her more than those fuck-me short skirts & halter tops. She neared me too, but only so much.

She could smell cherry juice on me & it was true. I specialized. I was patient. The others said I was smarter & went slower.

What I had was an older sister, a room next to hers, a radiator that spilled her phone calls into my room.

So I listened. Most of it was obvious. The boys called to beg & tease. The girls to gossip, compare notes.

I just fucking listened. I'd jack off to my collection of porn, calm down, turn out the lights, wait.

They liked little touches & gestures. A captured look. Flower petals in their locker. Conversation that wasn't boasting or sexual. Even stupid shit. TV shows.

They listened to the guy's words in ways he didn't know. Listened, in, around & through.

I didn't get it all. Her phone calls & what I saw as I got to high school too didn't much match up.

But I tested things out. Worked my mind out to speak not just say. I made sweet gestures even when I wasn't on the prowl. Just to test.

They noticed. Like a pack sharing one deep lasting sniff, they noticed.

For a long while I took advantage. They had what I wanted, offered it, more or less, I took. I enjoyed.

Your sister was the first one I stumbled with. She let me have some, liked a little begging but no, it didn't go where I wanted. She had a look, it undid me.

And I tried to bury myself of it. You wonder about that night? I wanted it over, if I had to share her with the team. I didn't care. You were the bonus. For the long wait. I didn't think you'd elude some fun.

It all sounds stupid. Now. Then it was important. We played hard for school pride. We deserved the best pussy.

Finally you say it. My name. "Toby."

I nod.

We're watching a TV show, getting nearer. Traveling like this through times isn't sexy like the movies. You drive. You sleep in the motels you're told to, the ones that keep you intact. They call it physical integrity.

It's about a Queen on an Island, long ago. Something about a bull that emerged from the sea. She had sex with the bull. They cut that part out of course.

"Toby."

"Jasmine."

"Tell me more."

"What do you want to know?"

The more I look at her, the more I want to leave this motel room. Her face is soft, her beauty bright, probing. What these concrete walls aren't in every possible way. The beds are hard, the pillows thin, the blankets old & colorless. Her cheeks are a very light roseate. Me, the jock, & words like that.

"You rescued me."

"I was sent."

"By?"

"You know."

She grimaces. "The ships overhead."

I nod.

She's in jeans, & a black t-shirt that says "Is this all really enough for you?" I feel her body tendering & it nearly undoes me in these dank motels we stay in. Her eyes are grey, her hair a beautiful long brown.

"Is this the White Woods still?"

"It's all White Woods once you realize it. You know that."

"I know that I was with Cosmic Early. And now I'm not."

"You'll see him again."

"Can we get a drink somewhere?" That older, lusty look. A hint of sloppy swilly sex in it.

I shake my head. "Sober as church mice, Jazz."

"Where are you bringing me?"

"You're needed."

She stretches on her bed, a yoga move or two. Feels me watching too close.

"Why haven't you tried to fuck me, Toby?"

"I have fucked you. I just kept it to myself."

She laughs, really laughs, young & lustful. Nods.

Turns back to the TV, that movie is still on, we turn up the sound. Jazz makes me get us chips & candy from the vending machine next to the office. Two sodas. She likes root beer.

Relaxed more now. I still want to fuck her but OK, maybe later, maybe not.

I was up there, Jazz, in those ships, & I know a lot of things better. This world isn't unique, isn't separate. I learned that most of what I'd been told to believe was wrong. Others had started the myths & stories. Once they stuck, everything built on them. We were stuck with them.

But they needed me for something. Told me I dreamed well. It would be useful. OK.

"Where's Ashleigh?" Jazz is looking at the TV & there is a scene in a castle & there is a girl who looks precisely like Ashleigh. Down to the beauty mark on her left breast. She'd let me lick it quite a few times. Liked me to cum for her while licking it. I complied. You would fucking too if she was in your bed in only a pair of black boy shorts.

I didn't flinch. "We're going there."

"To an old movie on TV? Is that a destination?"

"It's where they're sending us. Something has to play through."

Jazz suddenly is off her bed & all over me, tongue in my mouth, hand teases my cock in my pushed down shorts, one fingernail teasing, pushing me down, curling my hand to feel her & feel her there & there & *there*

Whispers, "Is this what I need to do to get a fucking answer from you?"

I tempt, *o shit fuck do I tempt*. Make shit up one thing or another but fucking *have her*.

I roll free. My cock tries to stay. Really really tries. She smells like dirt & sun & fucking the air to breathe itself.

She's breathing hard. My cock says that's a good start.

We turn back to the movie. The Queen is talking to the Princess. The Queen is sick, the Princess is hostile. Sits on the edge of her bed.

"Don't lead with your heart, child. It will betray you," she growls.

"What was your wrong to become like this?" the Princess demands.

The Queen smiles, handsome, not pretty like the Princess. "When they near you, child, hooked by your luring blood, do what I didn't."

Silence. "Sniff."

"Sniff?"

Silence again.

Jazz nods. Looks at me, now fully her self again, & nods.

I retreat to the bathroom to jack off, to shit, to vomit. There. Better.

(iii.)

Same freckles. Same short skirt. The first time in a handicapped unisex bathroom. We don't. She tries. She is young, half-rabid for a cock's hunger, wants me in her mouth, between her thighs, cumming on her tits.

Same freckles. Same short skirt.

I calm her, time & again, lick that tight bare cunt suck it slowly, patiently til a moan, a hard breath, another moan, & here they come, nibble that clit, *oh just a little*, now more & she is writhing, moaning, yelling, it fills the theater & I hear the film cry it back, on screen a girl in a chamber, her eyes red, blazing, her man, the King himself, going down on her til good & wet for his cock & then again & again, her cries pain pleasure, crazy want, & my girl & the King's cum across the theatre to each other, in harmony, alternating & she wants me in her finally & I desist to know better, *fucking freckles, short skirt*—

Lights out but I know she's decorated this bathroom for us, nobody else uses it anymore, there are blooms, candles—

"What is your name?"

"The same every time."

"Tell me. Please."

"Cordelia."

I make her dress. She behaves for awhile. Sits with me. Holds my hand. Sticks her tongue out suggestively at those two boys I came with. They keep a distance.

I show her my checker, my housefly. My comic book. *Curvilinear Comix* #2 "For Those Lost."

The movie is on but nothing happens for stretches. Long shots of the Island's empty



shores.

I open my comic book. Cordelia is calmed by the ocean. Begins to purr quietly. Her eyes are sea-green more & more.

I read. A castle, at night, a king in his furs & leathers. His daughter, a child, in love with the stars, with the swishing sounds of the sea.

The King talks of enemies, those who would take their home. "Our heritage & home. All we have built here."

The Princess embraces him closely, loves him with all she is. Cordelia holds my hand tighter as we watch & I try to remember I'm reading my comic but now I cannot tell.

They embrace, they are quiet again.

I look down at my comic book pages & they are sitting together, reading a book in a plush, candle-lit room. It's a book of patterns, page after page. He points, she nods, she keeps him close. These hours are rare.

Look up & the film shows dawn & a raked grounds, like something monks might maintain. The Princess is no longer a child as she arrives, shedding her clothes as she enters the grounds. Her body is slender, tight, not a dancer's body but she moves deeply, intentionally mixing one remembered pattern after another with dreams, mixing, gestating something as carefully placed stones & raked sands fly—

Look down & he is saying to her, "There are other weapons. Stranger strengths." She is trying one pattern after another for him, in the plush, candle-lit room. Tries, stumbles, tries again. He nods. He is impatient. But he loves her.

But as she leaves, others arrive to dance for the King. I look up, there's one. She never looks at him, not once, but that's the one who matched Cordelia's cries, that's the one he keeps in a private chamber. His obsession, what will destroy everything.

Her dancing is wild, no patterns, stranger strengths. Other weapons.

(iv.)

"Where now, Preacher?"

I look around at Iconic Square. It's very tall fountain to see, old, some of it broken off, but mostly intact. I try to assess a little. I have Preacher, Tweety Bird. My stupid dress & damp panties still. Mm. No complaints there.

Preacher is dressed in a red plaid work shirt & blue jeans. His skin is a dark deeply tanned brown. He isn't old yet, there's no fat or sag on him, but his short hair is a bit grayed. His fierce look would scare most women, excite a few.

He's getting his bearings, which spooks me a little.

"We're here, right?"

He looks at me. "We're in the Tangled Gate."

"Is that egghead for Dreamland?"

He looks at me harder. "I think some things relate strangely."

Hm. "Do we want to be here, Preacher? Is this where we're going?"

He continues. "Then again, some things are similar & can almost be treated as the same."

Fucking man. What part of listening do they ever learn?

Finally he nods like it's all been discussed & settled amongst us equals. Walks over to

the fountain & dips his hands in. Drinks. Motions me over. Cups his hands for me to drink. I'd call it romantic if it was some other man & girl at it.

But the drink does me good. I walk around with a clearer head, probably clearer than water should do.

"What's that?"

"It's the Gate."

"It's massive!"

I walk through it though I feel Preacher tense behind me. Look up to take the thing in.

"For those lost.' What does that mean?"

"I've wondered that."

"You've been here."

"In dreams, yes."

"Is this a dream?"

"No. We're really here."

"I don't understand."

"This is where we are, Genny. It's more than I hoped. I've dreamed of this place & wanted to bring you here that way. Show you. I knew we could share dreams. But we're not. We're here, all of us."

He seems excited & scared. I go all girly & go up to him. His embrace is gentle, distracted.

"What do we do now?"

"I don't know. For certain."

"What about uncertain?"

He looks at me. "This is the place everything comes from. The world. All of it."

"Here?"

He nods.

"How?"

"I don't know enough."

"What do you know?"

He nods. "Long ago, I would read old, arcane books. Looking for wisdom that mostly was no more there than in yesterday's newspaper. There are no ancient cures for the plights of humans, Genny."

I nod.

"But over & over was this idea that we're not from here. We came here. We were brought here. There was some agent."

"Not God?"

"No. Not in this. Not directly anyway. These were mortal beings of some kind, from long ago & they were powerful in ways we're hardly getting to."

"But?"

"Yes, but. They had managed to destroy their original home planet like what would sound familiar to us."

"Ahh."

"So they set about creating another world. It failed. And another. And another."

"How many? How long?"

"I don't know. These were just ideas & claims in many cultures over the centuries."

"What about Dreamland?"

"That's ours, Genny. Part of us. A more important part of us than most of us ever realize."

"So this isn't Dreamland."

"You & I aren't dreaming. Our bodies are here for real." He cups my breast & smiles. Yep. All here.

"So you wanted to bring me there but we came here?"

He nods.

"How?"

He shakes his head.

"And here is?"

"It's how they begin to build a world. The world emerges from here."

"Oh."

"They arrive through the Red Bag which is a dream path from here to there but they don't stop arriving until they are completely here."

"Is that what we did?"

"I think so."

"Can we go back?"

"Do you want to, Genny?"

I think a good long moment. Think about his hands on me, feel this place honestly for a moment.

"No. I guess I'd just miss my brother. Shawn."

That last time, did it feel like a last time? I was going, nobody would stop me. Shawn tried, then he let me go, it was a matter of minutes. He smiled, it was strange. I didn't think more on it till later. Now. OK.

"He's beautiful, Shiny." Was what I called you.

You nod. Smile. That smile's why the phone rings every five minutes. I know its interior, dark & uncertain sometimes, & yet it undoes me too.

"I want this."

You nod again. I try to thrust myself back into this moment, did you argue with me at all?

"Look after them, her."

His smile disappears.

I stop there, in this remembering.

"Preacher, help me."

"What, Genny?"

I sit on the ground, motion him down too. Tweety is sniffing nearby, OK I guess.

We face each other, twine legs & arms, deep stare into each other.

"Tell me."

"I need to go back. To a moment."

He nods. "You didn't like it when we used to do this. We stopped."

"It's my brother."

He nods. We focus. Preacher knows how to do this.

I look deeper into his eyes than I have in a long while, let, let some more, I'm rusty. Blur. I'm back.

He never said it was real, but it was something.

"Shawn, talk to me."

"I am, Genny. I'm happy for you."

"You won't take care of them."

"Of course I will."

"You stopped smiling."

"It wasn't that."

"What?"

"I flashed."

"Flashed?"

"To you remembering this moment later. Coming back like this."

"And?"

"I'm sorry, Genny."

"For what?"

"For not answering the door. That day you came back."

"You were there?"

"I still am. I couldn't explain."

"About what?"

"I can't."

Suddenly he snaps off. Preacher shudders.

"What happened?"

"I don't know."

"He knows about this."

He nods.

"How? What did we do?"

"He did it. He flashes."

Now she's riled. "I need him now."

"He doesn't want to."

But I do. But explaining that I've been in the Tangled Gate all along. I didn't intend it.

I just started to empathize. It began at the sink with the sponge I used to wash the dishes. I thought: what if it takes its pride? Washes with vigor the dishes & pots? Knows its time is finite. Does its job. Will be tossed to garbage any day.

I felt something. Sadness. Something. It's like me. Wants to do its best, understand, do good work.

It was a start.

I began to think about reincarnation. Spirits returning in different forms. Why not a chair or a spoon or a plastic soda cup? Why not anything? What if it was all possible?

The idea appealed to me, at first almost like an escape route. After you left, Genny, I

was deep down sad, kept it there. We were close but I didn't get this until you left.

You rebelled for me all those years. I didn't have to learn how, I just had to watch you. In turn, I was your confidante when you hit the walls, & they restrained you.

With you gone, good ideas left with you. Girls still chased me but it wasn't fun. I didn't have you to make it feel good. I connected it all in my mind, which ones you liked. You liked details & we'd stay up late talking.

"How did she dress for you?"

"I don't know. Nice, I guess."

"Skirt? Halter top?"

"Yah."

"Makeup?"

"Some, I guess."

"Shiny! You have to pay attention like they do!"

I nod. "I know." But your stories were what mattered to me. When the Preacher came around, I could see you were bit. Your usual tricks—"show some leg & tit, throw in a little wit"—meant nothing to him.

So now you were gone & I had these ideas. My toothbrush, a yellow one, was getting worn. I had to protect it so I kept it in my room. I didn't have anyone to help me work out these thoughts.

I tried with one girl. One night. She dressed like the rest but she seemed smarter.

"Reincarnation? Like the Hindus?" I nod.

She thought about it, I could tell she was going to try & impress me.

"It just seems pointless. It's not my thing." She waits, cringes inward that I won't like this.

I show her mercy. Smile, let my eyes slide down to her chest, linger long. "Yah, you could be right." She relaxes a little. I don't see her again.

Finally, I don't leave my room.

Where did they go?

Truth is, I don't know. I slept more & more. I stopped eating, stopped pretty much everything. My question less & less had words, & so I couldn't ask it.

I know this doesn't make sense but maybe something happened. I mean, I didn't die. I came here. Where you are now. I don't think I'm here in the same way. But I can see you & Preacher there, on the ground, facing each other, trying to reach me. And you can't.

Anyway, if I did die, I did come back too, here. I'm not what I was, but I was right.

"We can go now, Preacher."

"Are you sure, Genny?"

"He was my baby brother. He understood about Tweety. About Penny. Everything."

"I know. You loved him."

"Love."

Preacher nods. They stand to move along. I could follow, but I don't right now.

(v.)

Bowie sits me down before I can go further. Looks me over with his green eye & his



MP: RS

mushroom eye.

“Limping.”

I nod.

“It happens.”

I nod again. Unreassured.

I ask: “What do you know of the Tangled Gate?”

“It’s real. It’s not.”

“Meaning?”

“It’s one of those ideas some get hooked on. An explanation. Esoteric as fuck but still.”

“And?”

“Do you really want to do this?”

I nod.

“What are you asking me for?”

“Is there an alternative?”

He eyes me closely, especially his mushroom eye. Seems to spin, glow, maybe both.

“No. Not for you. It may do you some good.”

“It already has.”

“Then why hesitate now?”

“It seems to swallow everything.”

He nods. “Some things do that. I wouldn’t worry.”

“Why not?”

“Because you are meaning well, trying to find the deeper roots. There’s no proselytizing here.”

“No preaching?”

He laughs. Stands up. “I didn’t say that.”

“You’re done?”

“Just write, Sonnyboy. There’s no more to this than that. The good pages, the shitty ones. Just keep writing. You know that.”

“I should.”

He hesitates, half-sits again. “It matters. This. What you’re doing. It’s not a question.”

“It’s not?”

“No. Push on, one way or another. You should know that too.”

“Is there a but?”

“No. There’s you doing this & the pages explaining themselves one way or another.”

I nod.

“Good.” He smiles. Charming.

“Thanks.”

“It’s not easy, then sometimes it is. Right?”

I nod.

“So keep that in mind.”

“Tangled Gate.”

He nods.

“Any hints?”

He looks past me. Gestures. “Follow him for awhile.”

I don't know who you are at first, & following you isn't easy—is this the Tangled Gate? It's too murky—

“Adjust”

“How?”

“Turn your head slightly, wiggle, jerk.”

I do, it helps some.

“Why am I following him?”

“Why do you follow anyone? He has something you want, information, something.”

I nod, adjust my walk, longer, steadier.

“Good. Now look around. Scrounge along here & there.”

I do. Walls both sides. Quite tall, vines & stones.

“OK. The Gate.”

“Where is he?”

I blink. Gone. I stop.

“This isn't helping anymore.”

Bowie nods.

“Stand with me.”

We're standing side by side now. Bowie is always taller, lankier than I remember.

We're looking at the Gate, massive, tall. Its legend “for those lost.”

“An offer of help?”

“Or refuge.”

I nod. “Maybe both.”

The Gate-Keeper has many cameras around us, moving closer, panning back.

Bowie grimaces, sits on the ground. I join him. The cameras panic to adjust.

Bowie speaks in my mind to continue befuddling the Gate-Keeper.

“He'll adjust in a minute.”

“What then?”

“**RemoteLand** is real. It's a movie & it's real. This is how it works.”

“When then?”

“There's a choice here. It's a film about a book, or a book about a film.”

“He & I are adversaries?”

“Maybe. Just keep it in mind.”

The Gate-Keeper's mics now catch our thoughts. Bowie pushes next to me, embraces me, leans his face against mine. Kisses, one, two, three, I hear his fingers snap, & poof!

(vi.)

It's a matter of piecing together, what Kinley calls Maya's first & my second understanding. Not better or worse, just the order of things.

Kinley, the Architect, is our connection, since Maya & I are never in the same scene. What we struggle at first to do is to communicate with Kinley & each other without the Gate-Keeper knowing.

“He’s not our enemy,” Kinley later explains. “His purpose is to make a very important film & we are for him bound parts of the narrative. Locked into our lines & motivations.”

“Why aren’t we?”

“I don’t know.”

“What are we trying to do?”

Kinley looks at me fiercely &, I realize also, helplessly.

“We play through, we learn, we leave. That’s all I can say.”

Kinley discovered that we can move freely when not on camera. Not in the current scene. It’s like he focuses on the current scene he is filming to the point of blanking out the rest.

“The problem,” he explains to us later, “is that there is no script. And what happens is that characters in the film not in a scene sleep mindlessly. Then we move again in our next scene.”

This would not have stopped but for something stepping in. Someone.

“My scene was over. My office dark, me standing posed, unmoving. Then there was a glint in the dark, a noise. It was . . . a cackle.”

Kinley stirred. Longer glint, several cackles. “I was half-awake but it felt like I was paralyzed.” So he used his mind. “I’m paralyzed. Please release me.” There were more sounds. “Click-clicks & noise-noises. More cacklings. I loosened up. I was OK. I could move. My office was silent.”

Later he heard another kind of cackle, urgent. He froze in place & held there as the film crew arrived to film a new scene. Felt a compulsion to move now so did. The cameras rolled.

“So whoever it is loosens us up so we can think & move, frees us, & warns us to freeze when it’s time for a new scene.”

Kinley finds Maya, & Christina, & the unseen cackler helps him to teach them the moves. Since the Princess is in most scenes, small or older, they decide it’s best the three of them not meet at once.

Maya plays the Princess as a child, which would seem a part she’s too old for, but it works.

“It’s mostly my dreams he films.”

“Your actual dreams?”

“I don’t think so. I mean they all take place in a cave. With many creatures who are my friends.”

“What do you do with them?”

“Oh. We have parties. We sing songs. They like me.”

“Are they real like us?”

Maya thinks hard. “They don’t know it’s a film.”

"They don't see the cameras."

"I don't know. It's like there aren't any. The Gate-Keeper tells me to ad-lib."

"Ad-lib?"

Most of Christina's scenes are in the Tower, erotically charged scenes between her & Kinley the Architect. Their chemistry is so fierce that the Gate-Keeper is fascinated. The film shifts its focus.

Christina is amused by it. Kinley isn't.

"At least we get to be together in this."

"We're not supposed to shape this so much with our . . . attraction."

Christina snorts her laughter. Kinley doesn't bite.

"What, tell me."

"We need to let this play through when we're on camera, not push it so much."

"Why not?"

"We don't know how we're changing things."

"I don't get it, Kinley. Is this a film or real?"

"It's both."

Christina takes a rare leap from horniness & general stubbornness to ask: "What can I do?"

"Try to move the spy-glass around. See what you can see down there."

He tells Maya the same thing. It doesn't work when not in a scene, is inert.

The Gate isn't the same between what Maya sees & what Christina sees, presumably years later. He takes notes, begins to compile a map.

"Things shift."

"Shift."

"Come & go too. The Gate is not static. I don't think it's a set like the rest of this Island."

Then it occurs. An important scene that tells us a lot.

The King & I are arguing, about an invasion. We are in the Tower, Maya as Princess at the spy-glass, trying to move it. I've managed to piece up that we on the Island are political exiles from the mainland. The King wants to take back the capital.

"We're not ready," I hear my mouth say these words.

"We are. Plenty. Our forces in the city are edgy. They're exposed & waiting. Damned impatient too."

I wonder why he means to do this now. Then I see the red glare lining his eyes. I take a chance here. Compelled to say, "It's her, isn't it?" I don't. My mouth fires with pain but I hold it back. I've shifted the narrative. My knowledge of his affair with one of the Princess's friends remains unsaid.

Then Maya tells me later about a strong sense she had, of becoming unloosed in time.

"I felt like I was in a tree where the Tower came later, but also a starship long after the Tower was gone. It lasted a moment then the King was grabbing me & taking me away."

"How did he seem?"

"Angry but confused. Like something expected didn't happen this time. What you did—?"

"I don't know. It was a risk."

Maya doesn't mention that her creature friends whom she visits behind her bedroom wall during dreams don't like the Architect, or the Tower. There is a scene, it's like the point where Christina & I hand off the Princess between us. I'm no longer a child & my friends can't help me. They give me a birthday party, fearing it will be the last I celebrate with them. I let it play through, not knowing how to tell them the truth. Our many songs deep & lovely drape my heart.

(vii.)

I keep ever in my mind we are here to free Christina & re-unite Maya with her friends. I start saying this more often as the weight of being the Architect grows heavier.

I try to learn what I am & it is jumbling, as though the Gate-Keeper comes up with pieces of my history as needed. I suppose this makes some sense but it leaves me unable to contrive from clear knowledge.

I come from the future, a far, ruined future, & I have travelled back through Dreams but somehow now . . . arrived. I am here, no dreaming. Whatever this is, *I am here*.

I am here to prevent the future I come from. To use the Tangled Gate. To do so involves the Princess, from when she is small.

I learn, not sure how, that she travels the Gate by dreams. Her path is through her bedroom wall, into a great cavern, what Maya has told me. She sees no cameras but the Gate-Keeper is there & I am too. As she told me, the creatures are unaware of the cameras or the film.

I begin to think: they're real too, like the Gate. **RemoteLand** is imposed on this Island where the real *Tangled Gate* is & creatures of the dream live.

Am I repeating these things?

But it is the overwhelming sadness I am starting to feel & I was not expecting.

"What, Kinley?"

"A son. Of sorts."

"A son?"

"Yes. I love him."

"Is he a baby?"

"No. A boy. Young man nearly."

"I don't understand."

"It's part of the myth of this place. A son I escape with after helping the Princess free the Hero & dancers."



Christina thrashes about in my arms, her soft skin burning me here & there. We fuck, her word for it, but I decide I agree, which I realize that our characters don't do. But she's impatient, she loves me, insistently, & as she will point out herself, she's hot as fuck. Meanwhile, Maya behaves. For now.

"But why are you sad?"

"I will lose him. During this escape, he will fall into the sea."

"Oh."

"But he & I know it's intentional. It's a different secret way to the Gate. A way to free him."

"So he'll be in the Gate."

"It's nothing simple, Christina."

She relents stroking me for her pleasure & mine & moves into my face.

"Why is this worse for you than me?"

"I don't know."

"You're protecting us."

"Not very well."

Now she's mad. I wish for the stroking again instead.

"Tell me."

"Why are we here?"

"I'm stuck in Clover-dale. Maya's lost her friends. You decide we need maps of the Tangled Gate."

"And the film we're in?"

She shrugs. Holds my half-hard cock in her hand, thoughtfully, don't ask me how.

"Do you escape?"

"What?"

"With your son?"

"No. It's a ruse. To help him escape. I don't leave. I can't."

"Kinley, what can we do? You said you wanted maps. Will they help?"

I want to once in my life fuck this girl raw & wordless & she'd enjoy that too, quite, but I fetch her clothes & send her melting among shadows back to her Castle room. I don't know what happens but if I were to follow her I'd find Maya asleep in her bed.

Then suddenly I do. I arrive in her bedchamber, she's asleep, a lace shirt, no more, & I am waking her not to cry out, waking her—

"Maya, it's Kinley. Nod if you understand."

Small nod.

"We have to get the help of your friends in the cave."

She is slender & small in my embrace. I feel my body still raw from Christina tighten a little deep within. Ignore, talk on.

"I don't think the Gate-Keeper intends harm. He is from elsewhere, doing what he understands to do. But we're not here to lose ourselves to his film."

My body is tighter & tauter now, she smells sweaty & delicious, I am losing myself again, the

Architect yearns her, pain in her presence, holiding like this—

“Find a way, Maya, to elude him & his cameras. We need their help. Our business is in the Gate. But we’re in this, how do we extract ourselves? Find out for us, Maya,” & Kinley throws himself to the floor, now scorched by both Christina & Maya—

(viii.)

I already know how to elude the Gate-Keeper in my dreams, they are, after all, mine, & dreams, I triple myself so that he follows one & I leave her orders just to keep him moving, & another of me makes sure this works & would warn me, & then I hurry to the main cavern with the big tree in the center to talk to my friends, I hurry—

I have to explain in their words so I indicate I am in danger & they press near. The white bunny, my old friend, the giraffes, the many bears, they sniff & sniff for me to tell how to protect me—

Are they in danger? No. They belong here, this is their home, at least I think so, at least it is now, but I want them to understand & it’s hard so I look to the tiny panda bear for help in this—

She steps on my hand, & bites it. Shocked, I drop her, but quickly try again. Palm down. Ah. How to tame an imp, a little.

We look closely at each other. Her eyes are wide, her laugh mocking & cheerful.

She cackles. Not thinking, I cackle back. Delighted, she cackles some more & I reply.

She click-clicks & noise-noises. I try that too but it doesn’t work.

Finally, I talk in English just hoping. “There is confusion here & I need your help.” I show them Christina & Kinley in my mind & there is much commotion but they agree. They will protect us all.

My other selves arrive suddenly & we twine one again. I know cameras I can’t see have arrived, & I singe a pleasant song in nonsense cackling tongue the Gate-Keeper may craze to decipher, but will not.

(ix.)

Suddenly there is a hummingbird &, more beautifully than that, a deep knowing beneath my doubts.

The Gate-Keeper means well, I cannot deny this or find some other truth in it all.

But he is a man, a man of this world, however strange he is, however loosed in time he seems to be.

I cannot appeal to him because his loyalty is to the world of men, preserve, perpetuate. His film is some kind of . . . futuristic effort to reach through time & space & bind & mend. I don’t know if he fully understands it all but the creatures, Maya’s friends, have instructed me after their ways, & now I know.

Mine is not a role to play passively, to look toward the Gate-Keeper to shape & direct. No. The deep thrust of this film is to shape & mold from within.

I think. I think completely still, in my Tower’s darkness, & realize that the Island is real but that it was created by the Gate. The Island is a shell, or a chalice, & the Gate is its

miraculously drink, its source.

And **RemoteLand**? It is what Art makes when its brush is dipped into the source, & tries to *unlearn* how to paint & re-learn how to *create*.

So, suddenly, there is a hummingbird, & deep knowing.

At first, no words, no reaction to it. I'm confounded, I'm unsure. It's like the first time I saw Christina, the very first, before she saw me, before the classroom.

She was outside the school. Under a tree, reading. I'd kept a safe distance from the girls till then; knowing a good prostitute helped. We'd talk. Fuck, talk, fuck again. Talk more if she had time.

"Her name is Christina."

She smokes hashish in my bed, a lot of it. I do too but with her it's worship.

"Why is she different from the rest?"

"I don't know. Maybe she isn't. Maybe I'm wearing down, year after year of it."

"They never get older, do they?"

"No. But I think it's more."

"What more could there be, honey? You've got a prick, she's a untried sweet."

"Is that your answer to it all?"

"With most men, yes. With you, not quite. But I've known you a long time. Your work has tired you. I see that."

"I'm sorry."

"You're my friend, Kinley. My customer, but my friend too. I've had your cock in every part of me, all over me, I know you enough to feel the loneliness. Even if you find what you're looking for."

I nod. "She sits up front."

"Of course."

"She doesn't look at me. Most of them do."

"Why should she?"

I nod. She wraps me in her grasp again, strong for a small woman.

You were reading a book like that book meant everything to you, many books meant everything to you. This moved me.

"Her nice legs do too."

I nod. "She's smart too."

"Does she talk in class?"

"Nobody does. Not a one. I mean her papers, her tests. She writes thoughtfully & well."

You nodded. You stopped coming over. I only got you once briefly on the phone.

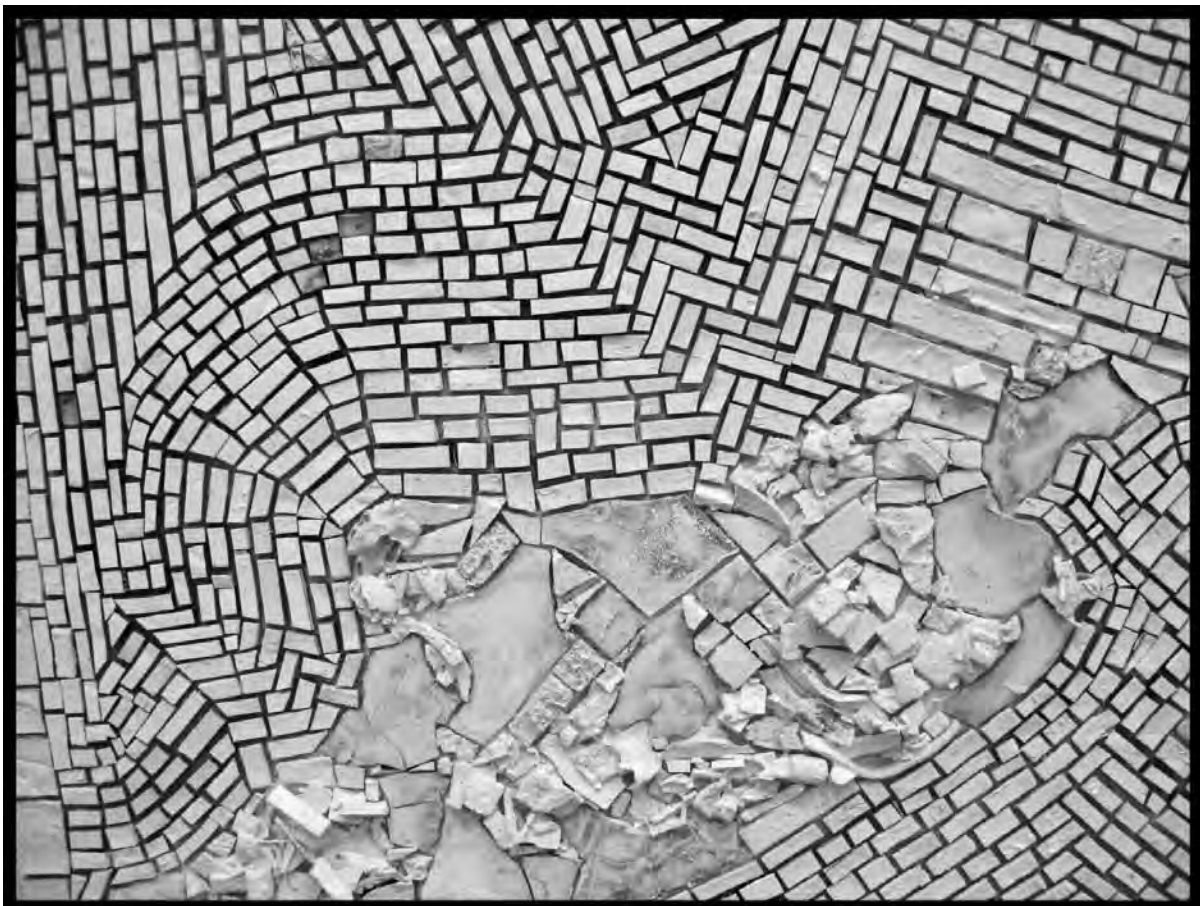
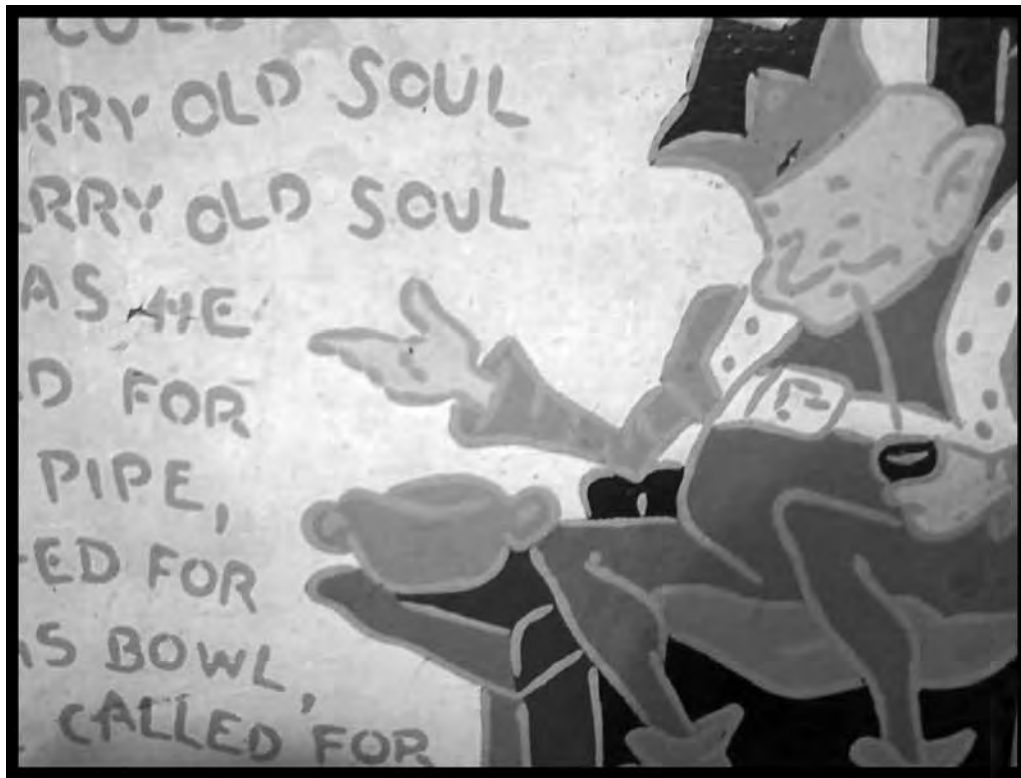
"Why?"

"You need focus to know what you're falling into. I can't be distracting you now."

"I miss you too."

You laughed. Paused. I could hear your breathing. Then hung up.

Again I wonder at what I have just received, beheld, whatever.



The hummingbird, what is this now?

In the script it's a picture book, Maya carries it with her a lot. She reads it often, or at least keeps it open. I'm not sure she & the Gate-Keeper value it equally.

"It's important to him."

She stares at me. She's not so much behaving anymore but it's not to do with me. It's the creatures in the cave.

"It's how we encounter each other in the Gate. It keeps appearing in different places."

She looks at me. "If it's just a prop, why are you so interested?"

"It's not. It's not anything to do with what he thinks."

"What then?"

"Do your cave friends know about it?"

Maya pauses, looks thoughtful, rare.

"No. They don't seem interested either."

"They don't know it by how you describe to them. It's not the book that matters. It's the story. The *real* story he doesn't know."

Since we're in her bedchamber, yes, here I am again, she makes her way into my grasp. She is not Christina. This gesture is not simply sex. Maya is much lorn within. I keep myself focused.

"He knows the hummingbird song about how mankind will remember its first song & fly away."

She nods, listens.

"In the script, I take the form of the hummingbird to lure you, to teach you."

Nods.

"I disappear from your paintings, reappear on your wall. Then I appear to you in the Gate, in your dreams."

Nods again. Getting bored?

"Look at me, Maya."

She does, instantly.

"The hummingbird is our way out."

"How?"

I shake my head. I know & don't know all I am saying.

She nods. Believes me. Is thinking about me in her bed. Considering. Lets Princess feelings wash through her for a long moment. I let her. She is lorn. I am near. I hold her & she suckles this closeness.

"You love Christina."

"Hopelessly."

"She's lucky."

I nod. I turn, kiss her deeply, a gentle kiss driving toward her riven places. Let her go, stand.

(x.)

These Creatures seem more important than the rest to me. I calm in their company, feel like . . . someone . . . something else with them. How much of it is the Princess role I play mucking into my head & blood? I don't know. I care less & less.

I don't sleep in my bed anymore. I don't know if sleep at all. I stay in the caves & tunnels with my friends & they are happy for this. We travel in groups, sniff our way along, we don't speak in men's words anymore. I love & I love & I love them, & finally I bring my lingering troubles to all of them, in the great cave where all can come & listen.

"I am not a Princess. I am Maya. I used to know what this meant but I don't so much anymore. But I want you to know what I am not since you are my friends."

They sniff, they murmur a little. They don't understand that the word they use for me matters.

I try again. "I came here looking for friends." I try to picture Samantha &, um, the old man, what's his name? Shit.

"It's why I came here with Kinley & Christina." There is some kind of nodding. They know Kinley & Christina are my . . . *undeniable ones* in some form of their language.

I sit still as they adorn my hair with blooms, vines, & pebbles, braid it long, dress me in leaves & feathers. They don't understand clothes but their gestures are with what they have, what they know.

Kinley says the hummingbird is our way out of the film. My friends here will nuzzle & keep me close, will sing in their wordless ways, but the hummingbird is something they cannot hear. I say it, I think it, it's not *there* for them.

The Gate-Keeper less knows me, is afraid? There is surprise, unexpected moves. He is thrown by my moves, over & over I think his ideas were few for me save that I loved the Creatures & abandoned them for the Architect, & perhaps found them again at a later time.

"I want to tell him, Kinley."

"Tell who, what?"

"The Gate-Keeper. I want to talk to him."

He's come to me in the caves. I bid my friends, sniffing & sniffing, away.

"We can't."

"Why?"

"We're pieces in his film, no more."

Kinley is trying not to look at me. I guess feathers & leaves don't cover so much. His eyes distract & linger on me. Scrawny but he looks. His breath trails down my skin, near, wanting, sweet & firm both & I make him a space close to me, where we twine, & close, & closer

Turns away. I cough hard.

"I would not say no to you."

"I would not ask. You know that."

"Christina."

"Dylan."

"Something."

"Yes. Something."

"Think it. Just think it."

My teeth & claws ride hard down your cheek, your lips, your breast, I bite & gnash your tummy, lash your pussy, lash again as you squirm as you feel me hard, lit up for taking you, holding you close, holding you to me, that first long hard take a year, a pricked cluster, opening cry of blooms, & again & again—

Turns away. “The hummingbird is our way out.”

Is this what Christina experiences?
I wonder. I don’t know. I don’t expect him back.

(xi.)

Then I find the coat. It is a long, worn leather coat, ankle length, dark, colorless really. I find it & its contents & I begin to understand. Everything.

There are countless small pockets sewn into its interior lining. Each contains an ornate little book, bound in thread, each a unique color. Red. Gold, Blue. Yellow. Pink. Rows & rows of them safely concealed in its depths.

These are the Architect’s record of the time beyond time where he—where I—have come from. They comprise a great document of knowledge that I have traveled with through time, the future as it came to pass, bad enough to cause me to return here to try & change things.

I hold these small books, each sits wholly in my palm, & I look at them, their covers, the threads each is created from. I *know* what they *are* even though I have not opened a one of them.

I wait, I hesitate. Then I tell Christina on one of our nocturnal visits. Usually these visits are partially to entirely sexual. She enjoys them. I do too even if I’m wishing we were doing something more than a lot of good fucking. I know telling her will not go well.

“Books.”

“Yes. A lot of them.”

“Little pretty colored books.”

“Yes. Look.”

“You haven’t read any?”

“No. I know what they are. I . . . recognized them. This was my traveling coat. This was how I came here, & all I brought were these books.”

She nods. Thinking. Such silences thrill me deeper than all sex, it’s like she *knows* more than I can for all my efforts & yet I can’t get her much to try.

“Open them”

“Open?”

“Read them to me.”

“I don’t know.”

“Or to Maya.”

“Maya?”

“The other one? The one you’ve only fucked in your mind?”

“Christina.”

She’s not mad. She’s amused.

“It’s OK one way or another. You’re sweet to resist. It would probably damage you more than her.”

I nod. How true. How Christina.

She takes pity, smiles, catches me up in her grasp, close, her smell drowns me in lust & love & stupidity, & just one word: “read.”

(xii.)

There is the old, long story of the school teacher & the white bunny & their many travels with friends, it is the kind of story that roots deep like the lovely trees in this courtyard, there are its lights, its shadows, like here, like tonight, & it begins simple:

the school teacher walks down to the pond near her father’s house, to the cove she & her brother would fish, & she looks up, to where the mountain reflected in the water is, & it isn’t there, still reflected in the water but not up there—

Accounts differ on details but her initial search for that mountain sets her on her travels, & her brother to looking for her, & they become like to their adopted father, who is a scientist & an explorer—

The books in Kinley’s found coat tell the story of the school teacher’s travels, & her brother, their father, & friends, many stories, & much to learn, but when Kinley opens one to read to Christina, he cannot deduce the words for they are written in a tongue one cannot read save in dreams—they look like blurry scratchings, page after page, Kinley looks at one book & then the next & next, & finds nothing he can read. He looks at Christina, shakes his head.

“You wrote them?”

“I think so.”

“They’re in a code?”

“I think so.”

“You don’t know it?”

He thinks. “It was the Sleepers.”

Christina blinks.

“We were trying to undo history. The Architect & the rest.”

“Undo.”

He sighs. Remembering pieces. Struggles. “In the far future, the world of men is ruined. Far worse than our time, Christina. The worst has slowly come to pass & it’s too late. Then, finally, men put aside wars & religions & hatreds to come together, the scientists & preachers & artists & magicians & so on, to construct a plan to breach the past, stop it from happening, there were mystics who tapped into the earth & oceans & trees & we concluded that we needed to breach the Dreaming to travel past history, find the key—”

“Find?” Christina’s look is one of interest but—

“We created a potion to drink to breach the Dreaming. It was like a super LSD—”

“To dose while sleeping?”

“Yes, in a chamber. A deprivation chamber, silent, filled with body temperature warm water. There’s more to it. But essentially there were these underground caves filled with these sleep vessels. Sleepers would wake and leave them for about an hour a day.”

Kinley pauses. Jerks his head.

But Christina’s chamber is quiet & there seems no danger.

“Were you nude?”

“Mostly. Maybe all. Why?”

“How did you sneak that big jacket & those books into that water?”

“I didn’t.”

“Well?”

“I built the chambers, Christina. I conceived & oversaw the creation of the drink. That’s why I’m the Architect.”

Christina starts, as Kinley does not look like Kinley for a moment. She is fairly nude in his close grasp. But he talks on.

“I had my doubts this would work. I knew other ways than a random stumbling back into centuries. But I had to give them hope, purpose. The world above was devouring itself in black days, starvation, disease. I needed time to find my answer, & to keep these people together in case I did.”

Christina nods, settles inly again. She loves this man whatever he looks like.

“The jacket was from a dream, I’d travel in it, I’d made it to hold the little books I’d compose while traveling.”

“So they are in a dream language.”

“I think so.”

“But we’re not dreaming.”

“Sometimes objects can cross from the Dreaming into waking.”

“But you can’t read them!”

Kinley nods.

“Where did you find it?”

“It was there, on a hook. I guess I hadn’t noticed it?”

Christina snorts. “Since when don’t you notice important things?”

He nods.

“Do you remember anything you wrote in them?”

He closes eyes, grasps Christina deep, powerfully, groans as though they are coupling dirty & well, she grasps him back, feeding him everything she has, eventually he relaxes.

“I wrote about the travels of a school teacher and her friend a white bunny. And others. Many others.”

Christina starts. “White bunny?”

“Maya.”

“*Maya*.”



(xiii.)

The Gate-Keeper gave me no instructions how to seduce the King, no ideas how to start—just that I am the demon who seduces & destroys him—

And some nights I get to sleep in the Gate-Keeper's arms.

I start slowly. Enough looking in closets & I find servant garb to get started. The white bonnet, the black & white frilly dress. A couple of buttons left undone of course.

He is King, he does not notice me at first. Many girls & woman vie for his eye, his word, his touch. In an island kingdom, what better path to success?

I try a different way. Begin to follow his path through the day. It always begins at the Dancing Grounds, where the Princess dances out her dreams of prophecy in raked sand paths. I see him studying several books closely as she dances, her eyes shut, like a trance all of this.

Nothing in the remain of his hours matches the daily care he gives this event.

So I dare all & one morning when the Princess has danced & departed, I show up. Dressed in not much more than nothing, I begin to move along the mussed paths of sand & stone.

I don't know what I'm doing so I dance closed eyes. A half-recalled page, sneaked in a glance from his books, a pattern, occurs to me & I let it move me. I feel the King pausing, looking, & then moving along. It's not enough.

So my next move is to befriend the Princess. She has no friends, I quickly determine. Spends her time with that strange Architect in his Tower offices.

So now I begin to follow her through her day. She is very pretty but lonely. Often roams the Castle's lookouts to yearn after the sea.

I take a chance. "It's nice here but far away."

She looks at me, nods, smiles. She is exceptionally bright, I have one chance.

"Nobody wants war with the mainland but I'm not sure how else we'll return there."

She's quiet. Shit. Talks then. "I don't mind living here. I just wish." Stops.

"Wish what?"

She does not reply. I invest days of encounters less & less casual before she finally tells.

"It's the Gate. I'm forbidden to go in it."

I nod.

"But I'm allowed to study its many maps! And I dream of it at night."

"Dream?"

"Every night."

It's slow inducing her details but I am able to cozy into her morning dancing. He notices finally.

I'm a demon. What does this mean? Am I just a really bad girl, misunderstood by all?

No. I'm not. As he watches me dance, the patterns his daughter has shown me page after page of in books, his lust sparkles something in my blood. I learn how to move just for him, how to tangle in his gaze until he sees nobody else, until he sees me all the time.

The Gate-Keeper has begun to film these various encounters as they grow more promising. He refuses me his bed until after the King has taken me. This makes me furious.

"I'm going to fuck him for you!"

He shakes his head. "No. You will give yourself to him completely. You will take him & absorb him & slowly start to poisoning him"

"Why me?" My toughness is gone.

"Because you are angry. Because none of it added up for you or meant anything. Until too late."

I nod. The paintings. They seem far away from me right now.

"Summon them. *Hard*. Let him take you forcibly at first. Bind him to you. Demand a secret chamber for coupling."

I nod & don't know what else to do.

"Preacher."

Nothing.

"Preacher!"

He looks vaguely at me. *Oh boy*.

King & Queen of this Island, should be a sweet time for us, all in all. Is, for a little while, I don't even mind his strange daughter. She's a bit creepy but OK.

But the other one. Holy fuck & fuck if Preacher doesn't want the little whore bad. *Wow*. She's always around, more & more. Though he does not look at glance at her, I can tell.

"Preacher."

"Yes, Genny."

"She's got a nice ass. Nice tits. But I don't know."

He's silent.

"I just have a strange feeling about it."

He says nothing. It's coming though.

And that movie-maker. How did this come together? We come here, Preacher more bug-eyed happy being in this Tangled Gate than just about anything ever. He doesn't neglect me in any way, he's *glad as fuck* I am here with him. Not much in all that to hook a pout on.

Still, I don't know. I mean, looked at simply, it's a labyrinth. Like the big ones farms have at Halloween. The bushy ones over in England.

Is, but isn't. That seems to be the way & my Preacher is thrilled to chocolate about it.

We wander it for a long time. Well, hours or days. Don't seem to sleep much in it. Not really day or night. Just grey skies.

Oh, & Tweety Bird. She's small now, since I drank from that fountain. It took a few hours but she fits in my hand. Doesn't say much. So I do. I try.

"Look, I'm not sure why you shrunk but we'll fix it somehow. Just trust me. Trust Preacher."

I think we have adventures along the way. There's a woods, a great big woods. I remembering looking down & seeing the tiniest little house I've every seen. Size of my pinkie maybe. I got the feeling it was not empty. I carefully walked on.

Sometimes things flashed by me. Creatures of some kind? I don't know. Fast. A game maybe.

When we come to the shore, some shore, there is a boat waiting for us. It is very small, on wheels for land travel too.

Now, weird, weirder, something, there are two skinny little black kittys wearing red colors, very blue eyes, waiting. Like a car, front & back seats. We get in back, I don't know how we fit, but I do notice Tweety Bird is bigger in my arms. They buckle us in, double check, safety first, I guess, even in the Tangled Gate.

It's a peaceful trip on whatever sea or ocean or body of water or body of whatever it is. The kittees pedal the boat wagon & we glide right along.

An island. Oh, of course. I look at Preacher but he's just drooling. Wish I was naked & that was the look. Ah kvetch kvetch. Here we are.

Close anyway. The kittys stop pedaling a distance away, turn & look at us brightly, silently. Time to swim, it seems. Preacher unbuckles us both. He pets each kitty's head gently, they don't purr but they are surely as transfixed by his touch as I am by their blue eyes.

My turn, it seems. I pet each but I don't have Preacher's, um, creature touch. I say, "Thank you. Be safe on the sea." They listen profoundly. I think hard & fast, it hurts but: "we may need you again." We all relax at once. Preacher clumsily leaps into sea & then lifts me in. A gentleman with a super brain & a tender touch. I'm smitten anew.

The boat wagon paddles away & we are in the sea, not as cold as I feared, not in the least. We swim, slowly, steadily, to the Island & pretty tired wetly stagger our way onto the rocks & sand.

How from then to now? We were Genny & Preacher; now we're King & Queen.

We were sitting naked in the sun, warming ourselves, drying our clothes. I kept my further ideas to myself but it was a nice stretch with the sea.

Then I noticed the movie cameras. Various kinds, some embedded in rocks nearby, some perched at a distance. Before I reacted, I froze, realizing this wasn't the Jersey shore.

Soon a number of people were gathered around us, drying us off &, uh, waiting our will. I caught Preacher's eyes once. He simply nodded & allowed the drying. And the dressing.

Long flowy things. Many colors. Beautiful, really. Sandals. And our golden leafed crowns, small. Maybe for beach fun.

Preacher led us up the long hill toward the Castle. I fell in with it. If nothing else, I wouldn't let him down with my confusion & stupidity.

Fell in with it, like I knew what *it* was. A sort of play? On film? A resort island for crazies to play King Arthur? Oh, I would have asked, but I didn't. From the moment I put in the queenly clothes, I felt compelled in my words & ways. Not prisoner, not amnesia to my real self so much as this *was* a part of my self, some part I hadn't known. But real, valid. Like a weird reincarnation, backwards but still.

I still loved Preacher but it was shot hard with sadness. I learned one way & another I was his second wife. The first dead. The Princess his daughter but this didn't feel right, true, in my bones. He loves her, though, simply, cleanly, um, bigly, & I never raise a jealous eyelash.

This Island home is a beautiful place, but Preacher-King longs to return to the mainland. This I'm not sure I understand. Love here, return there? I learn religious fanatics, led by an ex-

friend of Preacher-King, had taken the throne from him, driven us & our followers here. It's politics, I'd ignore it, but I am cleaved to the King.

I came here from another place, a gift from another kingdom, to maintain peace. The Queen in me feels lorn, lonely, unloved. We sleep in separate chambers. This drives me crazy but I bide my time. Preacher will find our way.

Nobody notices Tweety Bird in my arms. She is usually quiet but they don't see her. Fine. We talk at night in my large gilt lonely lorn chamber. A bed big enough for Preacher & I to triple ourselves & have an even better time. Nope. Just like that motel. Me & Tweety. My body still hungers but is damped by the Queen's heavy melancholy.

"What do I do?"

"You stay patient."

"How long?"

"Until."

"Until what?"

Tweety mums up. She sniffs more than talks & I can tell she has no real answers but raised hackles.

I learn I have a bevy of witches, seers, mystics—crazy women imported from my homeland to comfort me, keep me company, distract me.

There is a darkened chamber they keep, where they gather, none else would go.

One, young, appallingly pretty, long red hair & witchy blue eyes, becomes my favorite. She dresses in what seem to be swishing shiny rags, her thighs & breasts in & out of view like a curtain blown by the wind.

I say little, let her earn her pay, or whatever.

She has a silver ball, small, like a pinball, urges me look.

I see, before she even comes, the girl who will take Preacher. She comes from the sea, she is a vengeance from someone or something. She leaves the sea naked, so I get to see it all. The dark eyes red-rimmed. Full lips & breasts. Round, sexy hips & ass. Her pussy strangely shaved in symbols. Jesus fuck, wish I had a cock. I nod.

The seer looks at me. "Your moment will come. It won't seem so. But there will be an offer, a trade. You will accept."

"Will I make it out of here with Preacher?" I slip the name but she doesn't seem to notice.

"Accept the deal. You don't belong here."

"*Tell me, you freak bitch,*" I growl. She shrinks. Good. "How do I get out of here with him?"

She smiles terrifyingly. My imagined cock shrinks up. "You pay the full price of having come."



To be continued in Cenacle | 86 | October 2013

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NEW ENGLAND

Notes on Contributors

Ric Amante lives in Melrose, Massachusetts. His fine poetry appears regularly in *The Cenacle*. He previously contributed photos to **Manifest Project II** (*Cenacle* | 72 | April 2010).

Charlie Beyer lives in Idaho. His most recent delightful prose appeared in *The Cenacle* | 83 | December 2012. More of his writings can be found at: <http://therubyeye.blogspot.com>.

Joe Ciccone lives in Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts. His poetry last appeared in *The Cenacle* | 84 | April 2013. His poem in this issue is based on real-life events whose participants shall stay unnamed.

Joe Coleman lives in Melrose, Massachusetts. His pieces in this issue mark the first time someone has contributed poetry, photos, & artwork to a single issue. Plus the front cover!

G.C. Dillon lives in Plainville, Connecticut. His fiction last appeared in *The Cenacle* | 73-74 | Summer 2010. Welcome return to these pages, & more to come soon.

Ralph Emerson lives in Glastonbury, Connecticut. His prose appeared in *The Cenacle* | 84 | April 2013. His photos for **Manifest Project III** are his first in *The Cenacle*. Years ago, he taught me to mind *everything* in the frame before snapping. Thanks, brother.

Judih Haggai lives at Kibbutz Nir Oz in Israel. Her dear poetry appears regularly in these pages. More of her work can be found at: <http://tribes.tribe.net/poetryjams>. Safe travels this summer, Jude!

Ido Hartogsohn lives in Tel Aviv, Israel. He is author of the 2009 book *Technomysica: Technology in the Age of Consciousness*. More of his work can be found at: <http://digitalmindsblog.blogspot.com>.

Nathan D. Horowitz lives in Vienna, Austria. His excellent poetry & prose regularly appears in these pages. More of his work can be found online at: <http://www.scribd.com/Nathan%20Horowitz>.

Martina Newberry lives in California. Her poetry last appeared in *The Cenacle* | 83 | December 2012. More of her splendid work can be found at <http://www.rollwiththechanges.org>. Glad to have you back too, Martina.

Rainer Maria Rilke was born in 1875 in Prague, & died in Montreux, Switzerland in 1925. His most famous poetical works include *Sonnets to Orpheus* and *Duino Elegies*. His *Letters to a Young Poet* in this issue was also re-printed by Scriptor Press in the 2001 Burning Man Books Series.

Tom Sheehan lives in Saugus, Massachusetts. His wonderful prose & poetry appears regularly in *The Cenacle*. His photos in **Manifest Project III** are his first for *The Cenacle*.

Kassandra Soulard lives in Melrose, Massachusetts. Her photos & graphic design work, wits & mysteries, make this journal profoundly better than it would otherwise be.

Raymond Soulard, Jr. lives in Melrose, Massachusetts. Sitting in a newly finished office in Bungalow Cee, listening to fiddles & guitars, watching leaves wave on the breeze. *Abhh.*

Zannemarie Lloyd Taylor lives in Melrose, Massachusetts. Her charming photos for **Manifest Project III** are her first for *The Cenacle*.

* * * * *



"Follow your bliss
& doors will open
where there were no doors before."
--Joseph Campbell



